DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 373 585 FL 800 722

AUTHOR	Chisman, Forrest P.; And Others
TITLE	ESL and the American Dream: a Report on an Investigation of English as a Second Language Service for Adults.
INSTITUTION	Southport Inst. for Policy Analysis, Inc., CT.
PUB DATE	93
NOTE	138p.; Two tables in highlighted boxes may not copy adequately.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; Articulation (Education); Educational Assessment; *Educational Needs; Educational Planning; *English (Second Language); *Limited English Speaking; *Literacy Education; National Surveys; Politics of Education; Program Design; Second Language Instruction; Transitional Programs

ABSTRACT

An investigation of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) services for adults in the United States is reported. The goal was to examine ESL services as a national system and determine how well that system meets the needs of limited-English-proficient adults and the nation as a whole. The study had two phases: (1) review of literature, information sources, and priority issues, and (2) investigation of a variety of research activities, through site visits and interviews with policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, scholars, and others. The report begins with a profile of the population in question and overview of the need for and considerations in providing ESL services. The existing service system is then described, including different types of instruction (adult basic education and ESL) and services (survival language teaching, language learning as a goal in itself, academic ESL, pre-employment language training, workplace ESL, citizenship ESL, family literacy). Different kinds of service providers and funding are examined, and an assessment is made of how well existing services are meeting the need. Significant challenges are discussed, including transitions between instructional levels and/or agencies, testing and evaluation, staffing, and use of technology. Political issues are discussed, and a strategic plan for ESL services is proposed. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 373 585

NCLE
1118 22nd STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20037

ESL

AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Heide Spruck
Wrigley
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

THE SOUTHPORT INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

Forrest P. Chisman
Heide Spruck Wrigley
Danielle T. Ewen

FL 800 722

ESL

AND THE

AMERICAN DREAM

A Report on An Investigation of

English as a Second Language Service

for Adults

by

THE SOUTHPORT INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

Forrest P. Chisman
Heide Spruck Wrigley
Danielle T. Ewen

©

1993, The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis
820 First Street, N.E., Suite 460
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: (202) 682-4100 Fax: (202) 682-2121

CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Story in Brief 1

Chapter 2: The Need for ESL 4

Chapter 3: The Service System 15

Chapter 4: Providers and Funders 30

Chapter 5: Meeting the Need? 46

Chapter 6: The Challenge for Programs 54

Chapter 7: The Politics of ESL 71

Chapter 8: A Strategic Plan for ESL 85

Endnotes 113

Sources Cited 121

Acknowledgements 128

Authors 129

Introduction

This publication is the final report of an investigation of English as a Second Language (ESL) Service for adults in the United States conducted by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. The ESL investigation began in November, 1992 and was completed in December, 1993.

Adult ESL service provides language and literacy education to adults who speak a language other than English and are not fully proficient in English. For the most part, ESL programs offer a generic English curriculum that focuses on improving the speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills of those who participate, and on providing them with a cultural orientation to the United States. Some ESL programs offer second language education in specific contexts, including "survival" or "life skills," family literacy, academic English, workplace education, and employment training. ESL providers also sometimes offer various other forms of assistance, such as help to immigrants in accessing social services and in increasing their participation in the civic life of their community.

ESL service for adults has become a topic of growing interest in recent years. In part, this is because the demand and need for this service, as well as the number of adults enrolled in ESL classes, have increased greatly over the last decade. In part, the increased interest is due to a growing concern about immigrants and immigration policy.

There is a large body of literature on education for language minority children, as well as on adult ESL. Most of the literature on ESL for adults, however, focuses on issues of instructional theory and technique, or profiles the findings of particular programs and practitioners. This work is extremely important. But, by itself, it provides only a fragmented picture of adult ESL service in America.

The goal of the Southport Institute's investigation was to examine adult ESL service in its totality: to view the many efforts to provide and support this service from a national perspective. That is, the Institute's goal was to investigate ESL service for adults as a national service system and to determine how well that system, taken as a whole, meets the needs of the adults who require ESL service as well as the needs of the nation as a whole. Because almost all authorities on adult ESL believe that the service system, so conceived, is inadequate in many ways, a further goal of the investigation was to develop and propose a national strategy for improving its performance. No large-scale investigation of adult ESL for these purposes has ever been launched before.

This report is, then, the first comprehensive assessment of adult ESL service in the United States. While its focus is different from that of other research in the ESL field, the Institute hopes that it will complement previous efforts and provide practitioners, administrators, policymakers and the general public with information and insights that will be of value.

The Institute's investigation was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, Institute staff conducted a survey of the available literature and sources of information. In addition, they sought advice about priority issues and sources of information from experts on adult ESL. Part of this initial consultative process consisted of convening one-day meetings of experts in Illinois, California and Washington, D.C.

The second phase of the Institute's investigation consisted of a variety of research activities. Institute staff conducted special analyses of data available on adult ESL and related topics. In addition they sought information on particular issues from a wide variety of published sources and by extensive telephone and personal interviews. At the same time, Institute staff conducted two-week site visits of adult ESL efforts in Texas, California and Massachusetts, as well as shorter visits to Chicago, New York and other cities. During these visits Institute staff interviewed policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, scholars and others involved with or concerned about ESL service to adults. They also collected data and other materials, and they observed many different types of ESL classes. In addition, Institute staff interviewed a wide range of people in Washington, D.C., who are knowledgeable about adult ESL. In total, more than one hundred people were interviewed in these various locations.

The final aspect of the Institute's research consisted of convening a panel of nine expert consultants on adult ESL. Each consultant was asked to write a background paper on an aspect of this topic that Institute staff considered to be of special importance and to provide general advice to the Institute on its investigation. The panel met three times in 1993 to discuss the individual papers and deliberate about more general issues. Some of the papers will be published by the Institute.

This report is based on the information and ideas gathered from these various sources. Although a great many people made extremely valuable contributions to the study on which it is based, responsibility for the contents of the report rests with the authors alone.

Chapter One

The Story In Brief

By best estimates, there are 12-14 million adults in the United States whose native language is not English and who have serious difficulties speaking, understanding, reading or writing the English language. Most of these people are immigrants. Most are in the United States legally. And there is every indication that most very much want to learn English or to improve the English language abilities they have.

To help them, all levels of government and many private organizations provide English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. These efforts serve about 1.8 million people each year at a total cost of approximately $700 million. But, they are manifestly inadequate in a great many ways.

Despite the large numbers of people they serve, ESL classes fall short of meeting the demand for service: most have long waiting lists and most do not provide the full range of services that people who are seeking to improve their English need and want. Moreover, the quality of most programs leaves much to be desired: the learning gains of most students are modest, and most programs are locked into an instructional design that is poorly attuned to the many different needs of the learners they serve.

Because of these problems in the quantity and quality of service, the United States is falling behind in meeting the needs of adults with limited English skills. Their numbers have increased by 3.5 million over the last decade.

ESL service does a fairly good job of helping recent immigrants with very limited English to get an initial leg up in dealing with the language, literacy and cultural problems of living in the United States. But it does a rather poor job of helping adults with very limited English to improve their skills to the point where they can take full advantage of the economic and social opportunities of American life.

In large part, the disappointing performance of ESL service in this country is due to the fact that ESL for adults is, and long has been, a neglected backwater of our educational system. It is a poorly supported, low-status activity to which most educators and policymakers give only passing attention. In fact, the neglect is so serious that there appears to be active or de facto discrimination against serving ESL students in some public programs.

This neglect is a national disgrace. As a result of it, ESL service for adults consists of a maze of often disconnected efforts that are usually grafted onto some larger educational or social service undertakings. The resulting pattern of service is so disorganized and complex that no one really knows how it works; no one can provide satisfactory answers to many of the most elementary questions about service and funding.

But this much at least is clear: at the federal, state, local and programmatic levels, adult ESL lacks an institutional and financial base, as well as the professional and institutional infrastructure that any educational service requires to succeed. In these circumstances, it is an open question whether there is anything that can truly be called an ESL "system" in the United States.

Why should we care? Most of the nation's concern about education is focused on improving our elementary and secondary systems: on education for children, rather than adults. And, to the extent that education for adults is an interest, most of the focus is on upgrading the basic skills of people who speak English as their native language. We still have a long way to go in that crusade. In this context, why should we care about the 12-14 million adults who need ESL service and the adequacy of the service they need?

As one scholar of language issues put it, this is like asking, "Why should we care about educating us?" Adults in need of ESL service are a large and growing part of the workforce in many of our major cities, and they will be for the foreseeable future. Although they have skills, knowledge and talents to offer to the nation, their limited English abilities severely restrict their economic opportunities and their opportunities to contribute to national economic growth. They are also a large and growing portion of the community in many of our major cities. Language differences are too often the source of social divisiveness that is destructive to the community as a whole.

In addition, the demand for ESL service is overwhelming our adult education system: most people would probably be surprised to learn that about half of what is often called "adult literacy" instruction in the United States consists of ESL. And as if all this were not enough, helping adults to learn English and to improve their prospects in life is one way of helping their children.

At a time when immigrants and immigration issues are making front page news, the nation must wake up to the importance of ESL service for adults. There was a time when the need and demand for adult ESL was fairly small, but that time has passed. The continuing neglect of this field is largely due to the fact that educators, policymakers and others responsible for its fate have not caught up with its growing importance.

We can no longer afford that neglect. Educators, policymakers and the public at large must make the effort to understand this complex issue. And they must make the effort to build an effective ESL system for adults in the United States. This will require a concerted plan of action on many fronts — a strategic plan for ESL — because almost all aspects of the field have suffered from neglect. Such a plan must include at least the following elements:

- separating the administration and financing of adult ESL from other educational and social services to create a base on which a coherent and accountable service system can be built;

- providing adequate and equitable funding that will allow adult ESL programs to at least meet the demand for instruction with high quality service and make inroads into the larger unmet need for instruction;

- diversifying the services offered by adult ESL programs so that they more closely meet learner needs;

- improving the state of professional practice in adult ESL;

- creating a professional infrastructure that will give a voice to adult ESL providers and students and provide support for policies and practices to upgrade the field.

There is no inherent reason why these measures cannot be taken and why the nation cannot have the high quality ESL system it very much needs. ESL for adults can and must become a national priority. The United States can and must respond to the challenge of helping the 12-14 million limited English proficient adults gain the opportunity to fully participate in American life.

Chapter Two

The Need For ESL

The first step toward improving the nation's system of providing ESL instruction for adults must be understanding the full dimensions of the need for service, because that need is much greater and more complex than most people suppose. Understanding the need begins by understanding the numbers of people who would benefit from service, but it extends beyond that to the implications of those numbers for the nation as a whole.

THE NUMBERS

Adult ESL service is so neglected that neither the federal government, nor any other organization gathers reliable figures on the population in need of service or the services provided. It is possible, however, to estimate the dimensions of need and service from a variety of sources, and most estimates fall into the same range. These estimates tell a powerful story.

There are, according to the 1990 Census, 25.5 million adults (people 18 years of age or older) in this country who speak a language other than English at home. Of these, 5.8 million report that they do not speak English well,[1] and an estimated 12-14 million (including the 5.8 million)[2] have serious difficulties with speaking, understanding, reading or writing English. These are, in the unfortunate jargon of the ESL field, "limited English proficient" (or LEP) adults.

The 12-14 million adults are not people who simply speak English with a foreign accent or make an occasional grammatical mistake. They are people who, in their own estimation, do not speak English "very well," and who score at very low levels on most assessments of reading and writing English. They are people who, by almost every indication, are at a serious disadvantage in American economic and social life because of their limited proficiency in English.

About 76 percent of the 12-14 million limited English adults are immigrants.[3] They were born in countries where English is not the dominant language and have not mastered it since they arrived in the United States. While "limited English proficient" and "immigrant" are not synonymous, approximately 47 percent of the 20 million foreign born adult Americans, and 67 percent of recent arrivals (adults who have lived in the United States for three years or less) have serious difficulties with English.[4] One quarter of the adults who scored at the lowest level of the 1991 National Adult Literacy Survey were immigrants.[5]

Although most adults with English language and literacy problems are immigrants, 24 percent of them were born in the United States.[6] Some grew up in what the Census Bureau calls "linguistically isolated households" and communities, where most people speak a language other than English most of the time, and they attended schools that did not provide them with an opportunity to become very proficient in English language or literacy. The Census Bureau estimates that 5.9 million people (including both immigrants and native born Americans) lived in "linguistically isolated households" in 1990.[7] Others were born here, but spent much of their lives in other countries, or in Puerto Rico, where the dominant language is not English, before returning to the United States.

The immigrants come from all around the world. In major American cities, as many as 100 different languages are spoken, and speakers of all of these are part of the limited English population. Native Spanish speakers from various countries make up about 60 percent of that population, however, and together with speakers of French, German, Italian, Chinese, Tagalog, Polish, Korean, Vietnamese and Portuguese, they make up 84 percent of the limited English population.[8]

Contrary to popular belief, however, Mexicans make up only about 28 percent of all immigrants and 23 percent of people with English language problems.[9] Most of the balance of the Spanish speakers come from Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and from Central and South American countries. Moreover, in 1991, the largest and fastest-growing group of legal immigrants were not Spanish speakers at all: they came from countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union.[10]

THE DEMAND

Each of these national and language groups has its own culture traditions, problems and contributions to make to the United States. But most of the limited English immigrants and native born Americans have one thing in common: they want to learn English or to improve the English abilities they have. We know this, because they swamp the English classes that are available. Classes supported by the federal government, states and localities, as well as by private organizations, enroll approximately 1.8 million people each year.[11] Yet with a few exceptions, they report large waiting lists, sometimes as large as the programs themselves. "Based on demand, we could easily turn the whole adult education system into an ESL system," one school administrator reports. Her program, which serves about 5,000 students each year, has stopped keeping a waiting list, because in her words, "They started to get five years long, and a five year waiting list is meaningless."

Other programs deal with the demand for service by shoe-horning students into classes that may be as large as 40 or 50 students.[12] Still others cut off enrollment or limit how long students can be enrolled.[13] ESL is the fastest growing area of enrollment in American community colleges and in programs funded by the federal Adult Education Act, which also funds Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED preparation services.[14] One administrator of an institution where the demand is particularly great laments that, "We are rapidly getting to the point where most of what we teach is ESL."

The impact of demand for ESL services on adult education programs is particularly troublesome to many administrators. Nationwide, approximately 40 percent of the people served by programs supported by the federal Adult Education Act are receiving ESL service.[15] In many large urban areas, the demand for ESL far exceeds the demand for ABE: literacy instruction that primarily serves native speakers of English. Because there are far more people in need of ABE service than ESL, administrators have to struggle with the issue of whether to base their service offerings on need or demand. In many areas, they have established an artificial 50-50 distribution to keep seats open for ABE students.[16]

In short, contrary to popular belief, there is every indication that the vast majority of immigrants and others with limited English proficiency very much want to learn English. And immigrants are particularly anxious to learn: approximately 95 percent of the people enrolled in ESL classes supported by the federal Adult Education Act were not born in the United States.[17]

THE NEED

Why do these people want to learn English? The students, themselves, give good and sufficient reasons. They want to find better jobs, gain access to educational opportunities and improve their abilities to cope with everyday living problems. They want to reduce their isolation from the English speaking environment around them, to feel a sense of pride and empowerment, and to help their children in school. In short, they want to achieve the American dream of opportunity, security and belonging.

And they are right to believe that improving their English language abilities is a key (although not the only key) to the American dream. Because, on average, the 12-14 million people with limited English proficiency have significantly lower incomes than other Americans or than other immigrants.[18] (See Figure 1 below.) And an analysis of the November 1989 Current Population Survey concludes that lack of English language ability is one of the major factors that keeps the incomes of immigrants down.[19] For a large percentage of limited English speakers, the only jobs available are in the secondary labor market: for example, jobs as housekeepers, janitors, gardeners, farm laborers and unskilled workers in the garment industry and electronics assembly

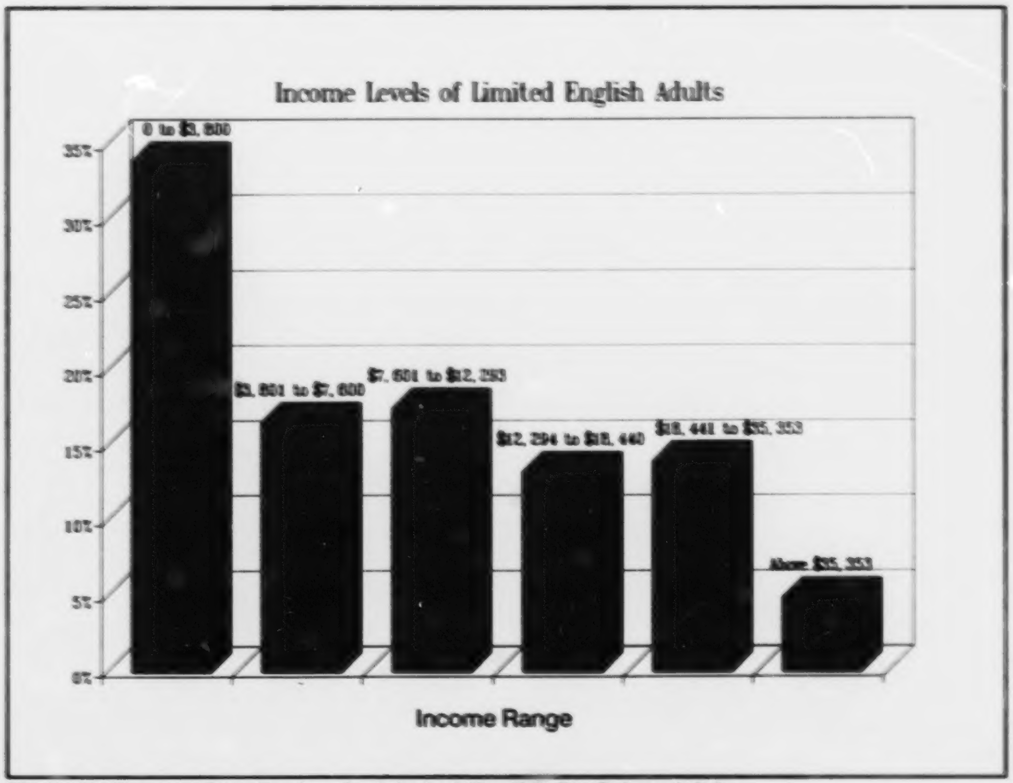

Figure 1 Income Distribution for **Limited English Proficient Adults**
Source: 1% Public Use Microdata Sample, **Bureau of the Census**

plants. These jobs pay low wages. Many of them lack fringe benefits and are subject to frequent layoffs.

Lack of proficiency in English also limits educational opportunities. The entry requirements for academic and vocational study at almost all institutions of higher education require greater proficiency in English language and literacy skills than the 12-14 million have achieved.[20]

Finally, limited English restricts their ability to participate in American society. For example, it restricts their access to public services. It is very difficult for adults with low levels of English proficiency to call an ambulance, report a crime or gain assistance in a landlord-tenant dispute. It is hard for them to fill out the endless succession of forms that government, business and other organizations require, or to understand the forms they must sign. It is hard for them to keep up with public affairs, if they cannot read a newspaper or understand what is being said on television. And, it is hard for them to understand and be understood by their English speaking neighbors. Language differences too often lead to needless social tensions and divisiveness. In the words of a recent Ford Foundation study, "If a single source of conflict among newcomers and established residents stands out, it is language..."[21] While many communities and some businesses make an effort to provide bilingual services for at least some limited English speakers, the only way to diffuse the potential for conflict due to language problems is to improve language abilities on both sides of the neighborhood fence.

In short, lack of proficiency in English prevents a great many immigrants and some native born Americans from achieving an important part of the American dream: from taking advantage of economic and educational opportunities, from access to the elementary amenities of American life, and from becoming an integral part of the communities in which they live.

HUMAN CAPITAL: THE CHALLENGE

All of these problems are reason enough for us to consider adults who have limited English abilities to be among the many disadvantaged groups in American society and to provide them with opportunities to develop their skills, as we do. But why should we be especially concerned about their lot? After all, in a nation of 185 million adults, this group makes up only about 6-7 percent of the adult population and about 5 percent of the population overall.[22] Their numbers are increasing in percentage terms: an increase of 43 percent over the last decade.[23] But in absolute terms, the increase is fairly small. By best estimates, at most 600,000 to 700,000 adults with limited English proficiency entered the United States this year.[24]

In a sense, these relatively small numbers are good news. The fear-mongers have no grounds on which to stand: this country is simply not being drowned in a wave of non-English speakers. Relative to the size of our population, they are a fairly small stream. At most the annual influx of limited English speakers is less than four tenths of one percent of our total adult population.

But one of the many paradoxes of ESL is that what is true nationally is not as true in particular localities. Eighty percent of all immigrants,[25] and about 73 percent of limited English adults, reside in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas). More than 30 percent of all limited English proficient adults in the United States (3.6 million people) reside in California alone and make up 17 percent of the state's adult population.[26]

Moreover, within those states, particular localities are experiencing a large influx of immigrants, and a large percentage of that influx consists of people with limited English proficiency. For example, an estimated 53 percent of the adult population of Miami, 29 percent of the adult population of Los Angeles, 49 percent of the adult population of Santa Ana in Orange County, California, 20 percent of the adult population

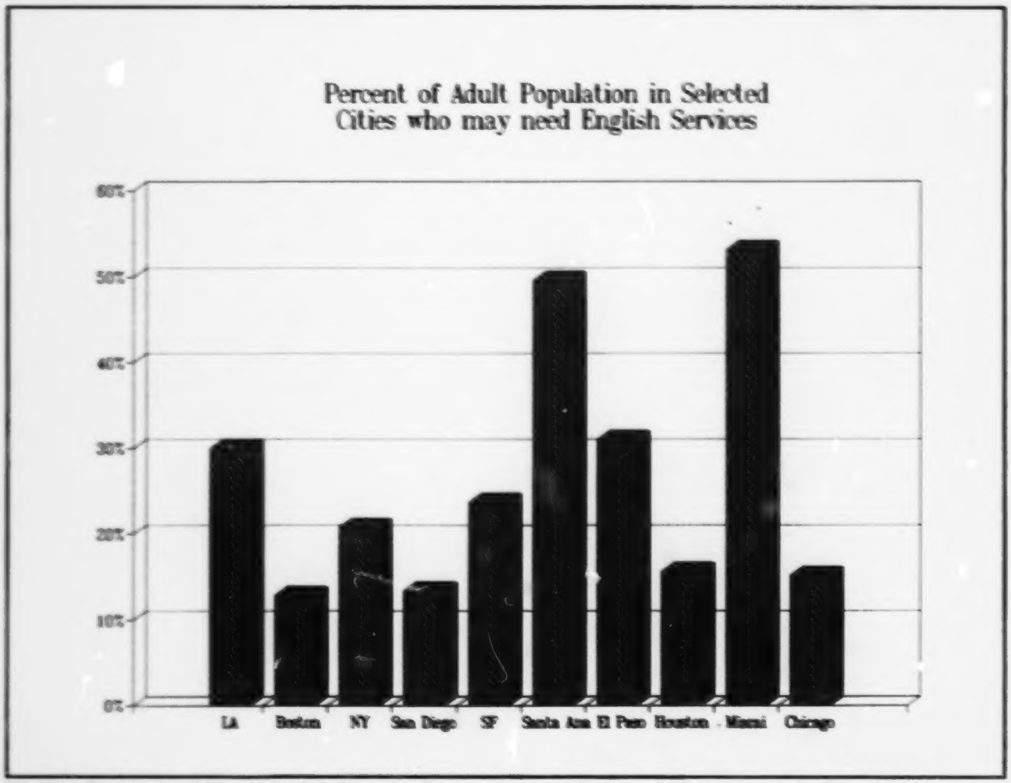

Figure 2 Limited English **Adults** as a Percentage of Selected Cities' Adult Population
Source: 1990 Census Tables

of New York City, 15 percent of the adult populations of Houston and Chicago and 31 percent of the adult population of El Paso have limited proficiency in English.[27] (See Figure 2.)

Despite all the recent alarmism about illegal immigration, most immigrants (at least 84 percent), and most limited English adults (at least 67 percent) are in this country legally and are permanently settled in the areas where they now reside.[28] That means that the economic and social future of areas such as Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Chicago and Houston will depend in large part on the economic and social future of their immigrant populations, a large percentage of whom have very limited abilities in English. In these areas, a large and growing portion of the available workforce consists of this population. And a large and growing portion of consumers, tax payers, neighbors and voters are and will be people with limited ability in English.

To prosper economically, these areas need a highly skilled workforce, and that means that the talents of immigrants must be harnessed and their English skills must be increased very quickly. In recent years, a host of government and independent study groups have issued "hit lists" of skills that workers need to improve American productivity and participate in the "high performance workplaces" of the future. These are skills such as the ability to work in teams, adapt to changes in job assignments, solve problems independently, and interact with customers.[29] In most companies, virtually all of these skills require the ability to communicate effectively in English. And if the experts on workforce skills are right, firms that operate in areas where a large portion of the workforce has limited English will be at a significant disadvantage in terms of their potential for growth and employment. By the same token, the areas in which these firms operate have limited potential for economic growth.

From this perspective, the argument of pro-immigrant advocates that new entrants into the United States only take jobs that Americans would not accept is misconceived.[30] While that argument may score points in debates with restrictionists, and while it is in large part true, it sells short the future of both the immigrants and the areas in which they are concentrated. To prosper over the long run, those areas need more high-skilled, high-wage workers who will perform the jobs that everyone wants. And a great many of those workers will have to come from the local labor pool: that is, a great many will have to be the limited English proficient workers of today. For the sake of everyone in the communities where they live, they should not be consigned to the secondary labor market.

Moreover, the future well-being of areas with high concentrations of limited English adults does not depend on economic factors alone. To maintain the vitality of these areas, people must have a decent environment in which to live and work. The problems that people with limited English ability face in gaining access to public services and participating in public life, as well as the dangers of social divisiveness created by language differences, are as important to the future of our major urban centers as the workplace skills that people who live there may or may not have. By definition, these social issues affect a large portion of the community in areas where a large part of the community consists of people with limited proficiency in English. But it is not only limited English speakers who are affected. The whole community suffers when public services are inadequate, when public participation is limited and when civility is strained.

The importance of the population of adults who have limited proficiency in English to the areas in which they are concentrated is not some abstract, futuristic scenario. It is a present day reality that will not change for the foreseeable future.

Arguments about immigration are of only marginal importance to this reality. If the United States entirely closed its borders tomorrow, the economic and social futures of many of the largest metropolitan areas in America would still be tied to the future of their adult limited English populations. This is because most of these adults are here legally, and they are unlikely to leave. It is also because most of them are prime working age adults. In 1991, the average age of immigrants at their time of entry into the United States was 28 years, compared to an average age of 32.9 years for the

American population as a whole.[31] There is every reason to suppose that limited English immigrants have about the same average age when they arrive in this country. That means they will be a large part of the workforce and the community in many of our largest cities for many years to come.

This concentration of the limited English population raises the issue of access to ESL Services from a personal, humanitarian issue to a national issue of major proportions. The large urban areas in which this population is concentrated are among our major engines for economic growth and our major social, political and cultural centers. It is impossible to imagine a prosperous and civil America without a prosperous and civil Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Houston and Miami.

HUMAN CAPITAL: THE OPPORTUNITY

But this way of looking at the importance of ESL tells only part of the story, and it wrongly casts those who need ESL service in the role of a "problem" that must be solved. It would be equally accurate to see limited English adults as a windfall of opportunity for this country. On average, immigrants, and the limited English population in particular, have fairly low educational levels. The averages are misleading. In fact, the education levels of immigrants tend to fall at the two extremes: they tend to have either very limited education and training or a great deal.

About one quarter of foreign born adults in the United States have an Associate, Bachelor's or some other advanced degree,[32] and many of them brought these credentials with them. As a result, the limited English population contains a goodly share of doctors, engineers, mathematicians, and skilled trades people. And it contains a goodly share of entrepreneurs who start small (and sometimes large) businesses, often in the retail trades, that create jobs.

The United States is, and long has been, the beneficiary of a "brain drain" from all over the world. In many cases all that is needed to unlock the economic, cultural and linguistic resources that many immigrants bring with them is help in improving their English. And it is very much in our national interest to provide them with that help as soon as possible.

Moreover, even immigrants without higher education credentials have at least one skill that is of great importance to our ability to compete in the international economy: their language. Companies engaged in international trade deal everywhere in the world. Somewhere there is some company that is desperately trying to recruit native speakers of almost every language for almost every level of employment. This manpower is available, either actually or in potential, among the limited English population. Their language abilities are a national resource. To make use of it, we must both help them to gain proficiency in English and increase their education and training across the board.

ADULTS AND CHILDREN

While most immigrants are hard workers and most want to improve their English, many have limited expectations about how much they can achieve. But most immigrants hope that their children, at least, can fully achieve the American dream, and they are willing to sacrifice a great deal for their children's future. The large numbers of children of Asian immigrants who take highest honors at our major universities are one indication of how well at least some immigrant families succeed in their aspirations for their children and how rich a resource they bring to the United States.[33]

But a growing body of evidence indicates that the pressures of living in a new culture puts a great many immigrant families at risk. This evidence suggests that family conflicts may result when children speak English better than their parents do, and these conflicts may threaten parental authority as well as contribute to the breakdown of traditional family structures.[34] A related body of evidence indicates that the low educational levels of many immigrant parents may affect their children. A recent RAND Corporation study concluded that, "One of the most frequent responses given by principals and teachers to a question about services most needed by immigrant students was that greater educational opportunities for parents would translate into more successful schooling for children."[35]

In short, it appears that improving the English language abilities and the general educational levels of immigrants could have a significant effect on the educational prospects of their children. And the two concepts are linked: improving language abilities is often a precondition for improving educational levels.

The need for adult ESL is, then, in part an intergenerational need. Helping language minority adults is one way to help their children achieve the American dream. In fact, one of the most common reasons that adult ESL students give for attending classes is that they want to be able to provide their children with more help in school work and to speak the language that their children are learning, which is English.

SOCIAL VALUES

Finally, the need for ESL rests on a broader vision of American society. The United States is a continental nation that contains, and always has contained, a highly diverse population. That is simply a fact, and it is unlikely to change. At our best, we have always valued both unity and diversity. At our best, "E Pluribus Unum" has been more than a slogan: it has been a national way of life. Our greatest national tragedies have occurred when we have allowed difference to become a cause for divisiveness. The long-standing tragedy of racism in this country and the tribalism that has recently become epidemic in the rest of the world should stand as warnings to us as we contemplate the future. Difference is the spice of American life, but divisiveness is its poison. We have more than our share of divisiveness in the best of circumstances; we do not need any more.

The most powerful antidotes to divisiveness in America are, and always have been, participation and dialogue. Our political, economic and social institutions are remarkably open. Through them, people of all sorts have the opportunity to join in, rub shoulders, exchange ideas and get to know each other, either through direct contact or vicariously through hearsay or the media. The resulting national dialogue breaks down stereotypes and fears. It allows differences to be understood and resolved. It allows common interests to be pursued. To the extent that the dialogue is vigorous and comprehensive, everyone comes to have a stake in the common national life and in the welfare of everyone else. People who were feared or despised "others" come to be seen as members of the local and national communities. Their similarities to us as citizens, workers, parents and neighbors become more important than their differences.

In a free society, nobody should be forced to participate. One of our freedoms is the right to be left alone. But there are today in the United States millions of people who want to take part in the national dialogue, but who cannot fully participate because they cannot speak, read or write the dominant language very well. If we do not provide them with the necessary services, we are feeding the fires of divisiveness. And we are robbing them and ourselves of a large part of the American dream: the opportunity to live in a free society where everyone can take part in the common life. All of us are diminished when this happens.

WHY CLASSES?

One final question needs to be answered about the need for adult ESL. Why do people with limited proficiency in English need ESL classes at all? Why can't they just pick up English on their own? The myth persists that previous waves of immigrants settled into American society, picked up whatever English they needed and did just fine.

But the myth is wrong. To begin with, since the industrial age, successive waves of immigrants have not fared as well as is often believed. The story of many immigrants has been a story of exploitation, prejudice and poverty. Their children and grandchildren may have been able to partake of the opportunities of American life, but the first generation has often been a generation of sacrifice.

And the myth is wrong that previous immigrants just picked up English on their own. Some never learned the language very well, because the rote jobs they could find and the ethnic enclaves in which they lived did not provide the opportunity or create the need. Moreover, many previous immigrants did go to English classes. Since the late

19th century classes in large cities, at least, have been provided by a variety of charitable, political and business agencies operating from a variety of different motives.[36]

The truth of the matter is that, with or without classes, people who want to learn English or improve their proficiency do a great deal of the learning on their own. The media, everyday encounters with native English speakers and simple practice are important ingredients. But even in the best of circumstances, learning English takes a very long time. Practitioners commonly estimate that it can take adults with low skills in speaking English and low literacy skills 3-5 years or longer to become proficient enough that they will report speaking English "very well." And it will take these adults even longer to become proficient enough in reading and writing to score in the higher ranges of most literacy tests.

These are common estimates for how long it will take people who attend the types of ESL classes usually offered to become proficient in English. It will take people who do not or cannot participate in classes much longer. ESL teachers commonly encounter students who have lived in this country for many years without gaining the English language abilities they need.

ESL classes, like formal instruction in any other subject, exist to accelerate the process of learning. By themselves, they are not enough. Opportunity to use English on an everyday basis is essential as well. But ESL classes provide a leg up and a base of support that can help people learn more quickly. They provide a structured method of learning, and equally important, a place where people can practice their English. For many immigrants it is difficult to find native English speakers who have the interest or patience to help them practice their emerging skills. Too often, the only people with whom they can communicate are those who speak their mother tongue. At the very least, ESL classes provide an environment in which the stress of learning to communicate in a new language can be reduced.

Accelerating the pace at which people learn English is important, because today's immigrants face a more demanding and complex world than immigrants faced even a few years ago. Low skilled jobs that demand little English are increasingly hard to come by. And where they exist, they provide little opportunity for either the immigrants or their communities. Not only do we need to include immigrants in our economic, social and political life, but we need to include them in that common life as soon as possible. Every year that limited English adults fail to attain the language and literacy skills they need is a year of lost opportunity for them and for the nation as a whole.

Chapter Three

The Service System

Clearly the need for adult ESL service is great and expanding. How do we, as a nation, respond to this need, and how adequate are our efforts? The answer to the first part of this question requires an understanding of the ESL service system for adults in the United States. Unfortunately, that system is extremely complex, and it must be understood in some detail to appreciate both its dimensions and its problems.

This chapter explains the general nature of adult ESL service, the diversity of the population served and the types of instruction offered. The next chapter describes the providers of adult ESL instruction and the sources of funding that support them. Together these two chapters create the foundation for explaining the problems of ESL service and for recommending a strategic plan to address those problems in the chapters that follow.

ESL IS DIFFERENT

Adult ESL service in the United States is a complex web of particulars that is difficult for anyone to fully comprehend. This problem is compounded by the fact that adult ESL is often allied with other types of service, such as Adult Basic Education (ABE), community college instruction, job training and refugee resettlement. These alliances blur the identity of ESL for adults and too often diminish its status in the education field.

The key to unravelling this ball of twine, and to developing a better service system, is to understand that adult ESL instruction is very different from other types of educational services with which it is allied. Broadly speaking, its purpose is to help non-native speakers improve their English skills so that they can succeed in an English speaking environment. The core skills that define ESL instruction for adults are speaking, understanding, reading and writing in English.

This means that adult ESL is much more than ABE with a foreign accent. ABE classes mainly serve native English speakers. Their primary goal is to improve literacy (reading and writing). ABE instructors can take for granted that their students are able to speak and understand English. ESL instructors cannot. The ESL field contains an entire domain (speaking and understanding English) that is simply not present in ABE. In short, ABE teaches literacy, whereas ESL teaches both language and literacy.

As a result, the skills of teachers as well as the curricula, program design and virtually everything else about ESL instruction must be very different from instruction in ABE. Teaching someone to speak and understand a language is, quite simply, a very different process from teaching them to read and write a language they already speak. At the most simplistic level, it is difficult for anyone to learn to read or write a language unless and until they understand the meaning of the words on the page. In short, ESL is not just literacy instruction with the added components of speaking and understanding English tacked on.

There is another important difference: the dimension of culture. Most ESL students are immigrants. Many have only recently arrived in the United States. American culture is as strange to them as their native cultures are to an American visitor (more or less strange depending on the culture). The way Americans do things, and at least some of the things they do, are simply different.

This adds still more dimensions to the ESL task. Any language and literacy instruction must have content. It is not just an exercise in teaching empty words. But if people do not understand many aspects of American culture, large parts of the content of ESL instruction will be meaningless to them. For example, what is a hospital emergency room or a small claims court? Unless people understand what these institutions are and have some idea of how they function, teaching the language and literacy skills needed to make use of them will be an empty exercise. As a result, particularly for new arrivals to the United States, but also for many other ESL students, a large part of the ESL task is cultural orientation: teaching them what they are talking and reading about at the same time that they are learning to talk and read about it.

Another complication that cultural differences create for ESL instruction is styles of interpersonal interaction. This problem takes many different forms. For example, in many cultures teachers are revered authority figures, and it is bad form for students to say that they do not understand a lesson in class. Many ESL instructors have to encourage students to be more assertive so that they can know what problems they have and when learning is taking place. This same type of problem extends beyond the classroom. Communicating is more than using words. Some ESL students must learn skills such as how to maintain the type of eye contact and physical distance in conversation that is customary in the United States, how to ask questions on the job, or how to use American forms of constructing letters and other written messages.

Given all these differences, it is not too much to say that, despite superficial similarities, ESL and ABE literacy instruction are only nominally parts of the same field. The ultimate goals and the people served may be similar in some respects, and there may be a common core of expertise. But the paths to achieving the ultimate goals of ABE and ESL are extremely different. In fact, considering them to be allied parts of a field that is called "adult education" probably conceals more than it explains. Yet this is the way that ABE and ESL are usually considered. And in this artificial juncture, it is usually ABE that receives priority attention.

Unless and until adult ESL can be recognized as a highly distinctive educational service that deserves priority in its own right, there is little chance for progress in its work.

THE PATHS OF ESL

One thing that ABE and ESL have in common is that, at their best, they branch out into many specialized types of instruction in response to the differing needs of learners. This diversity further confuses understanding of both services, and it even confuses discussion within these fields.

In fact, both fields differentiate their services along two major dimensions: the background knowledge and skills that learners bring to the programs, and the learning goals that they want (or need) to attain. But because of its added dimensions, this differentiation is far more complex in ESL than it is in ABE.

ESL instructors must struggle with the fact that students bring to class a wide range of skills in both language and literacy. At one extreme, some students speak absolutely no English and have very low levels of literacy in their native language. At the other extreme some students have a fairly good command of written English, some ability to speak and understand English and high levels of education in their home countries: they just need to improve their oral language abilities, and they have a good head start toward that goal. ESL students cover the entire spectrum between these two extremes: recent immigrants from poverty-stricken backgrounds typify the one extreme; foreign professionals who immigrate to this country typify the other.

To complicate things further, language and literacy abilities do not necessarily go together. Some students can speak English fairly well, but have virtually no literacy background; others are literate in their native language, but speak little or no English at all.

This diversity of background skills is one of the most troublesome issues with which ESL instructors must contend. One of the few certainties about any form of adult education is that students will learn far more quickly if instruction builds on the skills they already have. And they will become frustrated, and often drop out, if instruction demands too much or too little from them. For example, a substantial amount of research supports the notion that ESL students who are literate in their native language will acquire English language literacy far more quickly than will students who are not.

will acquire English language literacy far more quickly than will students who are not. This means that these students need different types of classes than those who have extensive prior schooling needs. One response to the differences in educational background is to provide ESL services that are specially designed for literacy students. Another response is to offer native language literacy as a bridge to ESL.

The permutations and combinations of different initial skill levels of ESL students are as numerous as any teacher or theorist wants them to be. In practice, limited resources dictate that only a limited number of instructional tracks can be offered. Because no one has been able to find an ideal way of defining those options, the form they take and the ways in which students are sorted into them differ greatly among ESL programs. Moreover, the necessity of limiting tracks means that teachers inevitably must deal with mixed ability classes. How they do this also differs widely both among and within programs. "Know your students and build on their strengths as best you can," seems to be the only general rule that holds.

TYPES OF SERVICE

Differences in the goals of programs further complicate the ESL picture. In practice, the goals of most ESL programs can be grouped under seven broad headings. And these headings also define the major types of service that adult ESL programs provide.

1. "Survival", "lifestyle" or "entry-level" ESL. The primary goal of this service is to help people with little or no English language or literacy ability gain the initial communications skills they need to function in American society. As one ESL scholar put it, "Imagine that you were suddenly relocated to Albania. Think of all the language and cultural skills you would need to just exist. That's survival English."[1] In fact, a great many people are abruptly relocated to this country: refugees from war torn countries are the best example. Others choose to make a rapid relocation in pursuit of economic opportunity, political freedom or any of the other things that draw people to the United States. Still others have lived in linguistically and culturally isolated communities in the United States. These are the students that entry level ESL seeks to serve.

To serve these and other people with very low language and literacy skills, survival English courses provide instruction that usually focuses more on oral language and acculturation than on literacy. Usually the literacy component is restricted to writing a few words, recognizing signs, filling out and signing commonly used forms and other very basic skills. In addition, survival English programs often try to facilitate access to a variety of social services — such as healthcare, transportation and legal aid — that newcomers to the United States desperately need. In many cases, these programs take on the character of multi-service centers, and in some cases they are located in public or private social service centers of various kinds.

2. English acquisition as a goal in its own right. Many ESL students say that their goal is simply "to learn English"— as much English as possible. And, in theory at least, many ESL programs are structured to guide students through a progression of language and literacy instruction that will, if the students persist, result in fairly high levels of English proficiency. Because students have very different levels of initial ability, these programs are typically structured around different "levels" of instruction. Students enter at the level that matches their initial ability and progress to higher levels in sequence. The number and meaning of these levels varies widely among different programs.

A common practice is to group students into three general ability levels: "beginning," "intermediate" and "advanced." Within each level it is common to distinguish between two sub-levels (often described as "high" and "low"). A student may, for example, be described as "high beginning" or "low intermediate." Effectively, these are six-level courses, and the expectation is that students will be able to master a defined set of skills at each level within a certain period of time.

Most large ESL programs are structured in this way, although the number of levels differs greatly. Fully articulated, multi-level programs can become almost impenetrably complex. For example, an outline description of the skills students should master and the teaching methods recommended for each level of a six-level program at one community college runs 60 legal-sized pages long.

In practice, very few students progress from the lowest levels of instruction in these programs to the highest, although some dedicated learners persist in taking level after level for many years. In most cases, students in multi-level courses progress about one level from where they entered and then drop out. No one knows how many, if any, dropouts from these programs subsequently reenter, or what their future language and literacy acquisition is.

3. ESL for academic study. Although many learners initially say that they simply "want to learn English," many eventually conclude that, by itself, language ability will only take them so far in the pursuit of economic and social opportunity. After a period of time in general ESL classes, many decide that they want to enroll in postsecondary education at community colleges, trade schools, or (more rarely in the first instance) four-year institutions. For many who come to the United States with some English skills, the aspiration to get a postsecondary certificate or degree is their initial reason for taking English courses.

Usually, learning English for academics is a two-step process. Most postsecondary institutions have some language and literacy requirements for the students they admit to their regular course of study. In some cases, they require that students take a placement test to determine their level of English proficiency. This may be a standardized test or a test of the institution's own devising. In other cases, a GED or other high school equivalency certificate is required. In still others, completion of a certain level of an ESL program is used for placement.

Students who score below a cut-off point on a placement test, do not have a high school equivalency degree or have not completed the required level of an ESL program (depending on the requirements of the particular postsecondary institution) are usually referred to a "non-academic" or "non-credit" ESL program. Often these programs are run by the postsecondary institution itself. Often, too, they are run by other institutions.

Community colleges are the most common postsecondary destination for limited English adults, and many community colleges have extensive "non-credit" programs, which are generally offered for free. Usually the structure and curriculum of these programs is very similar to that of other multi-level programs, and students often have the same levels of proficiency that they have in college courses that do not bear the "non-credit" label.

In some cases, these courses help students to learn language and literacy skills that may be somewhat related to the subjects they want to study at the community college. For example, students who want to become nurses may hone their literacy skills by reading about biology and their language skills by talking about medical problems. But this type of specialization is relatively rare. For the most part, the goal of "non-credit ESL" is simply to upgrade general language and literacy skills across the board.

Few non-credit programs increase English language abilities enough for students to have all the skills they need for college level work. But they can help students meet the requirements for admission to a postsecondary institution. Once they are admitted, a large percentage of previously non-credit students, and other limited English adults, are placed in "for-credit ESL" classes.

Students pay the usual tuition fees for these classes. In some institutions, passing them is a prerequisite for taking other courses; in others they are offered concurrently with enrollment in the regular course of study. Most for-credit ESL is very different from its non-credit cousins. Typically, it is housed in the English or humanities department, and the curriculum places heavy emphasis on grammar and formal writing.

Since their primary concern is refining English for academic use, for-credit programs rarely attempt to introduce into their curricula much of the content that their students are, or will be, studying in other subjects. The failure rate in these courses is very high, and complaints from other faculty that they do not help students prepare for the courses they must study are common.

Another common complaint is that for-credit courses are a form of economic exploitation. Critics allege that community colleges charge the same tuition and receive the same state reimbursement for their for-credit ESL courses as they do for other course offerings, despite the fact that ESL instruction is less expensive to provide. A related criticism is that students often take so long to complete for-credit ESL courses that their eligibility for Pell Grants or other forms of financial assistance is exhausted before they ever have a chance to get down to studying the subjects they want to learn. No one has shown how well-founded these criticisms are.

Despite the many barriers and shortcomings of ESL for further education, it is a major part of the nation's ESL service system, and some students do make it through to achieve postsecondary degrees and the opportunities they provide.

4. ESL for employment: pre-employment training. Next to a generalized desire to learn English, getting a better job is probably the most common goal that ESL students articulate. Many seek to improve their employment prospects by postsecondary education. But there are other routes as well. Some public and private vocational programs offer ESL instruction either prior to or concurrently with occupational training. Because no level of government seems to keep track of this type of service, it is difficult to tell how extensive it is or what form it typically takes.

In recent years, however, there have been fresh stirrings in the ESL for employment field. A number of federal programs (such as the Refugee Resettlement Program, the JOBS welfare reform program and the Job Training Partnership Act programs) have effectively required that participants be trained for employment in very short periods of time. For limited English participants, this means that they must master language, literacy and a trade in a few months, or a year at most. The programs that have developed in response to this challenge vary enormously from locality to locality. In many cases they are disasters. Students with limited English skills rarely get very much job training at all. Too often they are placed in regular ESL courses for their allotted time in the program and then provided with job search instruction and other assistance in finding employment.

In a few localities, however, innovative programs have emerged. These programs integrate language and literacy education with vocational training. That is, they take advantage of the fact that most of the work in any given occupation calls for only a limited range of language and literacy skills. They teach the core language and literacy skills that are needed for a particular occupation at the same time that they are teaching other occupational skills. Sometimes, to speed the process along, they include instruction in the native language of the students to explain points that they cannot yet comprehend in English.

For lack of a better term, programs that integrate language and literacy instruction with occupational training in this way will be called "VESL" or "Vocational ESL" programs, although that term is also often used to refer to any employment training program that serves ESL students.

VESL programs provide training in quite a number of occupations. Courses in business, manufacturing technologies, the allied health fields, office skills and culinary arts are the most common. There are relatively few high quality VESL programs (certainly less than 100 nationwide).[2] But by all indications they are highly cost-effective, compared to alternative ways of preparing limited English adults for skilled jobs. It simply costs a great deal less to enroll someone in a VESL program that lasts a year or less than to pay for three or six years of part-time ESL instruction and then enroll them in a vocational course. Moreover, according to one authority on the subject, compared to other vocational programs that serve limited English adults, VESL programs "report greater tested learning gains, higher than average completion and job placement rates, as well as a higher incidence of student continuation with advanced studies."[3]

In short, judging from the evidence that is available, VESL programs appear to be one of the brightest lights in the ESL field. They provide a direct and expeditious way in which limited English adults can better their economic opportunities. They accept the reality that most of these adults must work and cannot spend many years mastering English in ESL classes before they make an economic advance. They provide an avenue of opportunity for people whose English is far from perfect and often uneven. They do so by subscribing to the view that, in many occupations, ability to do the job well and to speak, read and write just enough English to do it, is enough to satisfy employers.

But the VESL approach has its critics. It is often accused of "dumbing down" education and training, and limiting the opportunities of graduates to the skills that are taught. It is also said that such programs ignore the need for a broader range of language and literacy skills that employees must have if they are to perform the tasks of "high performance workplaces" now and in the future. Inevitably, there is some truth in these criticisms. But they both presume that VESL training is the end of the educational road for its graduates. According to reports from VESL programs, this is by no means always the case. Many VESL graduates continue on to further education and greater job opportunities. And, in the worst of cases, VESL programs allow limited English adults to climb a rung up in the employment ladder that many could not otherwise ascend.

5. ESL for employment: workplace education. The other hopeful trend in ESL for work is the burgeoning interest of employers in sponsoring ESL classes for their workers. These efforts are often lumped together with other employer sponsored basic skills instruction under the label "workplace literacy" or "workplace education."

A significant part of the workplace literacy effort is workplace ESL. This appears to be because employers concerned about the basic skills of their workers are much more likely to identify language problems than problems of literacy, mathematics or other basic skills that their workers may have. Language problems are simply more visible and harder to hide. Moreover, as noted above, communication ability is key to making other improvements in workplace organization that many employers want to make, and it is also key to giving employees job specific upgrade training.

Finally, in a growing number of companies that operate in areas where many language minorities are concentrated, English language ability is becoming important as a way to establish a common means of communication for even the most elementary purposes. In these companies workers may speak a dozen or more languages. That means that they may have difficulties communicating with their work mates. It also means that the common practice of introducing bilingual supervisors to sort out communication problems is literally impossible.

For these and other reasons, a growing number of companies, including some large employers such as Marriott and Hyatt hotels, are investing in ESL classes for their workers. The advantage of this type of ESL service is that, for the most part, the goals of instruction as well as the payoff for employers and employees are fairly discrete and clear. Companies usually want their workers to learn English so that they can perform some particular function, such as performing their tasks in a new production process, greeting guests in a hotel, or reading certain forms or instructions. This clarity of both goals and benefits is rare in the ESL field, and it should greatly facilitate instruction. The vocabulary, grammar, and other skills required are delimited, and everyone concerned can be clear when the instructional goals are met: the test is whether the workers can perform functions they could not previously perform.

In fact, most workplace ESL programs are disappointments. Usually they take the form of six or eight week short courses with a very narrow focus. Workers are taught the language and literacy skills they need to perform some very limited task that the company finds problematical, such as answering the phone or filling out a particular form. The broader need for improved communication within the firm is rarely addressed. Problems that arise from cultural differences in expectations about how to interact with others on the job are often neglected. In short, most companies are willing to invest in narrow-gauged ESL training, but not in broader upgrade education for workers with limited English proficiency.

And companies often do not even get what they invest in. The common practice in workplace ESL (as in other forms of workplace education) is for companies to contract with outside providers of ESL services to design and provide customized instruction to their workers. Community colleges, adult education programs and commercial training firms are among the most common vendors. The companies usually provide release time for workers to attend classes, generally by a 50-50 matching arrangement in which employees contribute an equal amount of their free time. Classes are generally offered at the workplace, often at the beginning or end of the day, to minimize transportation and other logistical problems. Companies also usually provide some stipend to the vendors, which often does not cover the full cost of instruction.

The problem with this arrangement is that public institutions, such as community colleges and adult education programs, often have very little experience working with companies and tailoring their services to corporate needs. As a result, they often provide abbreviated versions of their standard ESL offerings that may not even reach the narrowly defined goals that the companies want to achieve.

The most common mistake of both companies and providers of workplace education is that they too often focus on the functions that employers want limited English speakers to perform without taking account of the full range of language and literacy skills that must be acquired before the workers can perform those functions well.

Despite these disappointments, workplace ESL appears to have a great deal of potential. At least some companies that initially underestimated their needs for ESL appear to have learned from the experience and are preparing for more ambitious efforts. And providers of all sorts are gaining expertise in this type of customized training.

Moreover, there is a sense in which workplace ESL must be made to work. The larger economic imperative to upgrade the language and literacy skills of workers in companies where limited English employees are a significant part of the workforce is bound to become stronger with every passing year. Most companies have the resources to provide service that will significantly benefit both them and their employees. Moreover, because most limited English proficient adults must work — often several jobs at a time — they do not have time to enroll in extended ESL classes. Workforce ESL is one of the few opportunities they may have for formal English instruction of any sort. And it is instruction that directly helps them improve their English skills for some of the purposes that they value most: holding onto their jobs, doing their jobs better and perhaps getting promotions or better jobs. The fact that some companies offer ESL and other basic skills instruction to families of employees as a fringe benefit is an added bonus.

In short, workplace ESL is one of the few ways in which the needs of many companies and workers that are experiencing language and literacy problems can be met. Although this type of ESL service is still in its infancy, it appears to have a great deal of potential. All the right incentives are present to make this service a win-win proposition for workers, employers and the economy as a whole. For these reasons there is a strong national interest in accelerating its growth.

6. ESL for citizenship. Almost any form of ESL instruction will help limited English adults to become more effective citizens, in the sense that the more they improve their English the more likely it is that they will be able to learn about public affairs, know their rights and obligations, communicate effectively with public authorities, neighbors and other members of the community, and perform all the other routine functions that might be lumped together as "being a good citizen."

But there is a more specialized sense of citizenship that is important for the ESL field: attaining the legal status of a permanent resident and ultimately of an American citizen. Because most limited English adults are immigrants, these matters of legal status are very important to them. Without citizenship they are disenfranchised: they lack the power to vote, hold office and in other ways play a role in directing the affairs of the communities in which they live. It is more than an arguable proposition that if more immigrants were citizens, politicians would bid for their votes, and they would receive far better public services than many of them now receive.

While attaining citizenship always requires some English language abilities, attaining the status of a legal resident generally does not. However, one of the defining periods of both the immigration and ESL fields was a time when legal residency and English ability were, in fact, linked. In 1986, concerns about the number of illegal aliens living in the United States had become strong enough that Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). This legislation established what came to be called "the Amnesty program." One aim of Amnesty was to allow illegal immigrants who had entered the United States before 1982 or were Seasonal Agricultural Workers (SAWs) to become legal residents. During a three year period, (1988-91) any pre-1982 illegal immigrants who came forth could participate in a legalization process. Part of that process involved passing an elementary civics test in English, or lacking the ability to pass the test, attending at least 40 hours of ESL instruction.

To support the ESL instruction and other services required by the Amnesty process, Congress appropriated $930 million in 1988, $900 million in 1989 and lesser amounts in following years in grants to the states (State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants — or SLIAG). One of the conditions of these grants was that, initially, up to $500 per year could be spent on ESL instruction for Amnesty applicants. Ultimately this provision was changed to up to 100 hours of instruction, on average, for each applicant.

The result of this initiative was a massive wave of applications for legalization and a quantum leap in the demand for ESL instruction. By the time the Amnesty process came to an end, 3.1 million people had become legal residents (1.8 million from the pre-1982 group and 1.3 million SAWs). The vast majority of them had very limited English skills — certainly not adequate to pass the civics test. Most attended classes for 40 to 60 hours and never took the test.

The Amnesty experience was very important to the ESL field in several respects. First, during the Amnesty period, the demand for ESL service doubled or even tripled in many areas.[4] The existing service system could not accommodate it. Existing programs were expanded, new teachers recruited and a host of new providers, including community organizations, large philanthropies such as Catholic Charities and commercial vendors entered the ESL field in a major way. Some of the expanded programs and some of the new providers did a poor job, but many providers gained valuable experience and a commitment to ESL that had not existed in their organizations before. In short, both the demand and the supply of ESL service expanded greatly in a short period of time. And when the demand diminished with the end of the Amnesty process, a large supply system was left behind that, if reactivated, could accommodate a large part of the need for ESL service in the United States.

Another effect of Amnesty was to increase the long-term demand for ESL classes. The available evidence indicates that most of the people who completed the legalization process still had very low levels of English language and literacy skills.[4] Most had never attended ESL classes before. A large portion indicated that they wanted to continue to improve their English.[5]

The final important effect of Amnesty is that, by legalizing the status of more than 3 million immigrants, it made them eligible to become citizens after the usual five-year waiting period. It is very much in the interest of most of them to do so, because it is manifestly in their interest to make the political process more responsive to their needs. Moreover, it is in the national interest for them to become citizens. A large disenfranchised population is grossly offensive to democratic values.

But becoming a citizen requires passing a citizenship test in English or answering questions about civics in English during an oral interview with an Immigration official. By most indications, a significant portion of the Amnesty population is not able to do either. They took the option of attending 40 hours of ESL instruction, and even in the best of circumstances, that amount of instruction is not enough to increase English proficiency very much. As a result, many Amnesty participants need more ESL instruction, as well as other forms of assistance in the complex process of naturalization. In fact, to become more effective citizens — to have the skills needed to participate fully in public life — they need far more ESL instruction than the naturalization process requires. Again, it is very much in the national interest for them to have access to the instruction they need.

In short, the Amnesty process made citizenship instruction an important part of the ESL field. Initially, this took the form of helping illegal immigrants pass the requirements of the legalization process. Soon there will be a great demand to help many of them become citizens. The supply of service providers is there. But the funds required to help large numbers of people through the naturalization process, including the funds for the ESL instruction they need, are simply not available. An estimated $812 million of the initial amount authorized for SLIAG was not spent by the states.[6] It has been suggested that these funds should be appropriated to help complete the Amnesty process by sponsoring ESL and other services to help Amnesty participants become citizens. In the interest of democratic values, this would seem to be a very wise investment of funds.

*7. **ESL in family literacy.*** In recent years, some ESL programs have become involved in the growing field of intergenerational learning or "family literacy." The basic idea behind the family literacy movement is fairly simple. A large body of evidence shows that the educational attainments of children correlate with the educational attainments of their parents, and another large body of research shows that the active involvement of parents in their children's education (in ways ranging from meeting with teachers to helping with homework and reading to children) helps boost performance in school. Finally, there is evidence that the desire to help their children in school is one of the major reasons why women, in particular, who have low basic skills sign up for literacy and ESL classes.

Family literacy programs are based on these findings. Their aim is to facilitate intergenerational learning. Typically, these programs are focused on mothers and their pre-school children, although sometimes they focus exclusively on the mothers, and occasionally children in the early grades of school are included. In many family literacy programs, both mothers and their children attend programs at the same site. For part of each day the mothers are taught ESL or basic literacy skills and instructed in parenting, how to work with teachers in school and other skills relevant to helping their children learn. During this period, the children are placed in enriched pre-school programs. For the balance of the day, parents and children engage in joint literacy activities, such as reading and writing together. Finally, there are usually "homework" assignments such as reading to children at home, going to the library or visiting schools.

There is to date no definitive evaluation of the effectiveness of family literacy programs. But there is evidence that they result in learning gains by children and adults. This evidence, together with the theoretical appeal of family literacy, has convinced a great many people that these programs are sound.

To the extent that family literacy has value, it would seem to be particularly appropriate for families where parents have limited English skills. Obviously, these parents will have difficulty helping their children with their writing assignments and other aspects of their school work. These difficulties will be enhanced if parents come from cultures in which the systems of education and attitudes toward schools are very different than they are in the United States. For example, at least some immigrant parents are reluctant to question teachers about the teaching approaches that are being used or about the difficulties their children are having in school. They are reluctant both because they come from cultures in which the authority of teachers is rarely questioned and because they are ashamed of their poor English.[7]

Moreover, a number of studies indicate that family literacy may be of value to immigrant families in another important way. These studies indicate that the children of immigrants often learn English and assimilate to American culture much faster than their parents do. Although they may also be able to speak their parents' language, they are often reluctant to speak it at home, and they often lose respect for traditions that are important parts of their parents' lives. This linguistic and cultural schism can lead to a breakdown of parental authority, dysfunctional families and misbehavior by children both in and outside school. And it can lead to low educational attainment by the children.

Too little is known about the problems that language and literacy gaps create in immigrant families. But if the problems identified by the existing studies are, in fact, as serious as those studies suggest, the family literacy approach may be able to help overcome very serious tensions in those families by helping to rebuild channels of communication between parents and their children.

Although family literacy would seem to have a great deal to contribute to families in which one or more members have limited proficiency in English, very few of the existing programs serve this population. This may be because ESL instruction is perceived to be more complex than literacy instruction for native English speakers, and integrating it into a family literacy context is seen to be too difficult. Moreover, the needs of immigrant families for intergenerational learning appear to differ in important ways from those of native born Americans. For example, while most family literacy programs focus on pre-school children, immigrant parents appear to be most concerned about the school performance and behavior of adolescents. And while immigrant parents want to help their children in school, the differences in cultural attitudes and understanding about schooling mentioned above must be addressed.

In all likelihood, intergenerational learning programs for immigrant families should be structured very differently from most of the programs now available, and they should employ specially trained staff. But, if there is value to the family literacy approach for those born in this country, there is certainly as much, and possibly greater, value for immigrant families. A few ESL researchers and programs are beginning to explore this territory. Potentially, it could be one of the most important forms of ESL service.

THE SCOPE OF ESL

Adult ESL service in America is, then, an enormously complex enterprise. This may be one of the reasons why it is so poorly understood and, hence, so poorly supported. Taken as a whole, the ESL field is trying to teach at least four different skills (speaking, understanding, reading and writing English) plus provide acculturation and social supports, to a highly diverse student body in the interest of providing at least seven major types of service. Not only is it very different from ABE and virtually any other educational service, but in almost every respect ESL instruction is more complex and difficult to provide.

In practice, few if any ESL programs attempt to teach all four of the core ESL skills to students of all types for all of the purposes that ESL might serve. But in the large states that contain most of America's limited English population, pretty much every type of service is offered to every type of student for every type of purpose somewhere.

Because of this complexity, it is very difficult for states, localities and even many individual programs to set curriculum guidelines or carefully monitor services. In practice, ESL is a remarkably teacher-driven system. Teachers exercise enormous discretion in every aspect of the instructional process, such as student evaluation, curriculum, materials, and instructional methods. As a result, no two ESL programs, or even classes, are alike in many important respects, even when they are serving students that are at the same levels of proficiency and have similar goals.

This complexity is reduced somewhat by the fact that the vast majority of ESL students nationwide (60 percent or more) are enrolled in "survival English" courses or the lowest levels of multi-level programs.[8] That means that most ESL instruction places far more emphasis on beginning oral language skills and acculturation than on literacy or other advanced skills. Most of the rest of the students enrolled in ESL courses are at the other end of the skills spectrum: they are foreign professionals brushing up on their English, students in for-credit programs or at the higher levels of non-credit instruction.

There is a missing middle to ESL service: relatively few students are enrolled at the intermediate levels of instruction. While this may simplify understanding of the dimensions of ESL instruction, it also creates cause for concern. What happens to the large number of low-level learners? Do they ever increase their proficiency to the intermediate or higher levels? And if they do not, is the ESL system meeting the needs of its students and of the nation for increased language and literacy skills? No one knows the answers to these questions. There has been no substantial research that sheds light on them.

Chapter Four

Providers and Funders

By best estimates, approximately 1.8 million adults are enrolled in some form of ESL instruction each year, and funding for that ESL instruction is about $700 million per year. No description of the nation's ESL system can be complete without a definition of who provides adult ESL service and who pays for it. The patterns of provision and finance are almost as complex as the system of service itself.

In brief, almost all of the funding comes from a variety of federal and state sources, with the states providing the major share; most service is provided by public education agencies of some sort; and policy is determined by a host of laws, regulations and directives at the federal, state, local and program levels.

PROVIDERS

The vast majority of ESL students are served by three types of institutions: adult education programs run by local education agencies, community colleges and private non-profit organizations. There are, however, quite a number of other institutions that provide ESL service, and each of them makes an important contribution to the national effort. Individually and collectively, however, their contribution is much smaller than that of the three leading providers.

For example, in many communities, libraries, commercial training companies, for-profit language schools, companies and unions (through workplace education programs) provide or support ESL instruction. But the number of people that each and all of these providers serve is dwarfed by the numbers served by the three leading providers. Four-year colleges and universities also provide ESL instruction to students with limited English proficiency. Most of the people these institutions serve are foreign students: about 30,000 per year.[1] This, too, is a number far smaller than the number of students served by adult education programs, community colleges and non-profit organizations.

Of the three leading types of providers, adult education programs and community colleges serve by far the largest number of students.[2] This means that most ESL service is taxpayer supported and provided through branches of the public education system.

But private non-profit organizations also play an important role. These organizations are usually lumped together under the misleading label "CBOs" (for "Community Based Organizations"). In fact, they are extremely varied, and their connection to any particular "community" is often tenuous at best. They include large national organizations, such as Catholic Charities, that provide ESL as one of their services. There are also some very large volunteer groups that provide ESL service, such as Houston Reads in Texas. In fact, many of the affiliates of the two major volunteer literacy organizations (Laubauch Literacy Action and Literacy Volunteers of America) provide ESL tutoring. CBOs also include medium-sized, highly professionalized ESL or general basic skills training organizations such as CET (the Center for Employment Training) in San Jose, California, CRDC (the Career Resources Development Center) in San Francisco, and Bronx Educational Services in New York.

Far more numerous are small neighborhood organizations, such as El Barrio Popular Education Program, in New York and the One Stop Immigration Center in Los Angeles. No one knows how many of these there are or how many people they serve. Some specialize entirely in ESL service; others combine ESL with some form of community activism and serve as community multi-service centers; still others are community service organizations that simply provide the location where other organizations deliver ESL instruction. Then there are the mavericks, such as the Catholic priest in Texas who teaches ESL by the Berlitz method and gives a money-back guarantee.

Although no one knows how many CBOs provide ESL service, they clearly serve a minority of learners: about 5 percent at most.[3] But they are important, because they can often reach people who are intimidated by large public programs, and because they are more likely to provide the type of personalized, multi-service assistance that recent immigrants and low level learners often need. They are important, too, because they have often been the source of innovation in areas of ESL service such as workplace education, family literacy, vocational training, and citizenship education, as well as in a variety of instructional techniques, such as integrating native language literacy into their curricula, and in developing whole new conceptions of ESL instruction, such as participatory education models. Finally, CBOs are important because they are a reserve army of service providers. During the Amnesty process, their ability to take up the challenge and rapidly expand service was of immense value.

CBOs are funded by every conceivable means. Some have fairly stable sustaining funding through contracts from government or business. Others cobble together support from grants, contracts, private philanthropy and local fund-raisers. Most are multi-source funded and constantly scrambling for money. And most of the smaller CBOs, at least, are burdened by the uncertainties of living from grant to grant and the multiple regulations and reporting requirements of different funders.

FUNDERS

ESL is, then, offered by a fairly wide range of providers, with three major types of institutions playing a central role. But a discussion of providers, in and by itself, can only hint at the nature of the ESL service system. The dimensions of that system are much more clearly demarcated by funding streams than they are by institutional differences. For example, in many large cities essentially the same type of service is offered to essentially the same types of students and supported through the same funding streams by local school systems under the rubric of "adult education ESL" and by community colleges under the rubric of "non-credit ESL." Physical location of classes is not even a clear demarcation: both community colleges and school systems often offer ESL at locations off their main premises. To get a clear idea of institutional roles, it is necessary to look at funding streams.

Unfortunately, no level of government keeps records on total ESL funding and how it is distributed, and a great many providers do not know where their funding ultimately comes from. An important part of the story of ESL funding and provision is that nobody really knows the story. Nobody at any level of government keeps track of adult service at all in a great many major programs, and even when they do, information is rarely collected on ESL. As a result, too many of the most important "facts" about ESL funding are estimates, approximations or informed guesses, and in too many cases there is a blank slate. From the information available, however, the following picture emerges.

Adult Education

1. Distribution of funds. By far the largest number of ESL students are served by federal and state funding for what are often loosely called "adult education programs." The federal Adult Education Act provides grants to states to support programs that provide adults with ABE, ESL and GED preparation services. Although the amount of federal funds that can be spent on GED preparation is capped at 20 percent, the Act places no restrictions on the relative amount of ABE and ESL service offered. In 1993 the federal Government provided $254 million in Adult Education Act state grant funds.

To receive Adult Education Act funds, each state is required to provide a matching amount from its own revenues equal to 25 percent of its allocation from the federal government, and all states meet this requirement. Many states, including the six states that contain 73 percent of the nation's limited English proficient population, provide far more than this required match to support programs that receive federal Adult Education Act funds. For example, California state officials report that, for the provision of ESL services, they match their federal grant with state funds by a ratio of 7 to 1, for a total that is almost as large as total federal spending for all purposes under the Adult Education Act. While California is widely conceded to be the largest spender (and to have the largest population in need of service), the other states with large limited English populations also match federal spending at very high rates.[4]

The distribution of adult education funds between ABE and ESL service differs nationwide. For example, California state officials report that 80 percent of their total spending on ABE and ESL goes to ESL.[5] New York, and a number of other states, have adopted policies that they will fund equal numbers of ABE and ESL students, and they distribute their funding accordingly. In recent years, however, several of these 50-50 states have tipped the balance to a 60-40 split between ESL and ABE in response to the greater demand for ESL service.

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that about one-third of the total nationwide enrollment in adult education programs consists of ESL students. A recent survey supported by the Department estimates that 42 percent of new enrollments are in ESL. Using this range of figures, an estimated 1.1 million to 1.6 million ESL students are served by adult education programs, about the same number of students served by ABE programs nationwide. Assuming that the cost of service is proportional to the numbers enrolled, an estimated $270 million is spent on ESL nationwide from federal and state adult education funds.

*2. **Providers.*** In all states, these funds are administered by divisions within state education departments and distributed to localities. The policies that determine distribution of funds and the resulting patterns of service vary enormously from state to state, and often from locality to locality. For example, in Chicago most adult education funds are administered by community colleges, whereas in New York City the Board of Education receives the lion's share of funding, and community colleges as well as the City University have comparatively small programs. In California, most adult education funding is divided between special adult schools and community colleges, but the nature of this division differs greatly across the state. In Los Angeles both the Los Angeles Unified School District and community colleges receive adult education funds for ESL, with the school district receiving the largest amount, but in San Francisco, the community college receives most of the funding, because there is no adult school.

Nationwide, it appears that local education agencies receive more adult education funds for ESL than do community colleges, although there is no reliable source of information on this point. Local education agencies operate programs in regular school buildings, special adult schools and often in neighborhood satellite centers located in churches, community centers or similar venues. Many community colleges offer "non-credit" ESL on their main campuses, but many also offer it at special off-campus facilities that very much resemble adult schools and at satellite centers. In some cases, the symbolic tie to the college's for-credit offerings is dropped, and the service is simply called "adult education" or "ESL."

A provision in the National Literacy Act of 1991 requires that CBOs receive "direct and equitable access" to federal Adult Education Act funds. State education officials establish the definition of "direct and equitable," and in many states they have administered this provision in ways that effectively exclude CBOs from all but small amounts of funding, despite the evident intent of the legislation. There are exceptions, however. New York has a long and continuing tradition of funding CBOs to provide both ABE and ESL, and in Houston, half the federal funding for adult education goes to a coalition of CBOs organized by Houston Reads.

This bewildering array of administrative and financial arrangements, along with an equally bewildering array of nomenclature, confuses administrators, teachers and students. With so many different funding arrangements in the administration of a single program, it is not surprising that federal and state officials are unable to keep track of how much is spent for ESL and how it is spent. It is also not surprising that local administrators and teachers are often uncertain where their funding comes from or what rules of the game they must play by: the federal government, states and the institutions providing service all have policies that affect how adult education funds are spent. Would-be students also are certain to be confused. Where do you go to get ESL service? It depends on where you are.

Nationwide, and in most states, there seems to be no clear rationale for the division of labor between community colleges, local education agencies and CBOs in providing ESL service. The patterns of funding appear to have developed over many years for local and particularistic reasons, rather than as part of a considered plan. There is no evidence to show whether the resulting division of labor is optimal in any sense. Because it causes confusion on the part of almost everyone concerned, and makes management, tracking and accountability for funds and services virtually impossible, it clearly is not optimal from an overall systems perspective. Because adult education funding trickles through so many different channels to so many different providers of so many different sorts, it creates a fragmented system that no one can fully comprehend and in which no one has clearly defined responsibilities.

Despite these complexities, ESL service supported by adult education funds is remarkably similar in a great many respects, regardless of where it is offered. Most programs are either survival English or multi-level programs with a heavy concentration of students at the lowest levels. In accordance with federal regulations, all ESL programs supported by Adult Education Act funds are free. Most are "open-entry, open-exit programs." This means that anyone can enroll in them, no one is required to attend them, and students can enroll and leave at any time.

3. ***Teachers.*** Most teachers — 75 percent or more — in adult education programs are part-time hourly employees,[6] and many teach in more than one program. Administrators of ESL programs frankly admit that they primarily employ part-time teachers in order to keep costs down: they assert that they cannot afford to pay for

healthcare coverage and other fringe benefits. In California, teachers in adult schools are required to have a state teaching certificate, but not any special training in adult education or ESL. Most states require no special qualifications to teach adult ESL. In-service training is at best limited to peer monitoring, occasional workshops, the distribution of guides and handbooks and a few days of training per year.

Despite the lack of certification requirements and weak in-service training, a remarkable number of ESL teachers have excellent educational backgrounds and a great deal of experience in the field. Many were language or linguistics majors in college, some taught English overseas in the Peace Corps or other programs, and a large portion are devoted to their work. One of the ironies of the ESL programs is that they employ a remarkably strong stock of human capital that they do very little to develop and often treat quite badly. The result is that a significant number of ESL teachers leave the field each year to seek more stable employment with benefits.

4. ABE and ESL. Another irony of ESL is that its very success in attracting students is one of the major sources of its problems. Because it is almost always paired with ABE, the relative division of funding for these two very different services is bound to be a source of contention. The demand for ESL in most large states is much greater than the demand for ABE, but the need for ABE (measured by the number of native English speakers with very limited literacy skills) is much greater than the need for ESL. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that, in many large cities, the population in need of ABE is perceived to be disproportionately African-American. Should the distribution of adult education funds be based on need or demand?

Those who argue in favor of need believe that more adult education funds should be spent on outreach to recruit people who need literacy instruction but are reluctant to attend classes. Those who argue in favor of demand believe that the people who want services most should get them. The Solomon-like solution that many states have adopted of maintaining a 50-50 percentage split between ESL and ABE enrollments may temporarily dampen the fires of dispute and avoid the possibility of adult education becoming a focal point for racial tensions. But it clearly denies a great many people with limited English the opportunity to gain skills they very much want to acquire.

5. Status. A final irony of ESL service supported by adult education funds is its remarkably low bureaucratic status. For an education service that is often accused of "taking over" adult education programs and community colleges, it occupies a low rung on the educational totem pole. At the federal level, the primary source of expertise on adult education ESL is a program specialist, who reports to the Director of Adult Education and Literacy, who reports to the Assistant Secretary of Vocational and Adult Education, who reports to the Secretary of Education. At the state level, responsibility usually rests with a program specialist who reports to the state's adult education director, who reports through various channels to the state's chief state school officer.

In short, there is no one at the policymaking level who has the full time job of supervising ESL service in the single largest program that supports it, and there is certainly no one who has the responsibility for supervising ESL service overall. ESL is treated as an aspect of Adult Education: a twin of ABE, rather than an important service in its own right. Supervision of ESL consists of the technical functions of monitoring and tracking, rather than making policy.

And, for the most part, people at the policymaking level whose responsibility covers ESL — the recent federal Directors of Adult Education and Literacy and their state and local equivalents — have had far more experience and interest in ABE than in ESL. In many respects, "the service that is eating adult education," is treated as a second rate priority by the adult education system.

For Credit ESL

From the information available, it appears that state funding to support for-credit ESL courses, largely in community colleges, is the second largest source of financing for ESL. A study by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges at UCLA reports that, in 1991, for-credit ESL was offered at 40 percent of community colleges, with 236,000 students per semester receiving service.[7]

Most of the funding that supports for-credit ESL comes from a combination of state and local appropriations for community colleges, tuition and fees paid by students, Pell grants and other forms of financial assistance, as well as federal and state vocational education appropriations. No one seems to know how much funding for-credit ESL receives from each of these various sources nationwide or the relative amount of support each provides.

Moreover, there is no reliable source of information on the total amount spent to provide for-credit service. But the total may exceed the amount spent on ESL by adult education programs. This is because community colleges are usually reimbursed for providing for-credit ESL at the same rate that they are reimbursed for other courses. That rate of reimbursement is much higher than the per capita cost of providing ESL in adult education programs. If the enrollment figures reported by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges are right, for-credit courses enroll about one-fourth as many students as non-credit courses. But it is entirely conceivable that, in many states, reimbursement of for-credit enrollment could be more than four times as large as the per capita cost of adult education.

In contrast to ESL service provided with adult education funds, the world of for-credit ESL is remarkably neat and tidy. Most programs are offered by community colleges on campus; curricula and instructional practices are fairly standardized within institutions; a larger percentage of faculty are full-time and some are tenured;

qualifications for employment usually include advanced degrees in applied linguistics or some other relevant discipline, although experience in teaching language minority adults is rarely required.

Clearly, higher rates of funding and clear lines of authority can buy a more orderly service system. The major concerns about for-credit ESL are not concerns about its management. Rather, they are concerns about whether its curriculum meets student needs, and the accusations of profiteering mentioned above. In so large an enterprise, both need to be explored more thoroughly.

Other Funders

In addition to the two major sources of support just discussed, there are quite a number of other federal, state, local and private sources of support for ESL. Most of the programs funded by these other sources do not provide ESL service themselves. Rather, they contract with community colleges, local education agencies or CBOs for ESL instruction.

Individually and collectively, these other sources of support provide relatively small amounts of funding for ESL, compared to the major sources mentioned above, and they serve relatively few students. But many of them have symbolic importance, and some have the potential to significantly expand their ESL service. Moreover, many of them are important sources of funding for CBOs. Finally, they provide an important source of funds for ESL programs that wish to diversify their offerings and reach special populations. For all of these reasons, some of the more important programs of this sort deserve attention.

*1. **Refugee programs.*** Two federal programs provide English language service to refugees. The first, managed by the State Department, operates in refugee camps overseas. In recent years, it has served about 20,000 refugees bound for the United States each year with a five-level program that stresses English literacy and survival English classes and also offers native language literacy instruction to people who cannot benefit from ESL. Programs are located in camps in Thailand, the Philippines and Kenya. The populations served by these programs have varied over the years as the refugee flow has changed. For example, many of the refugees recently served by the program in the Philippines have been Amerasians — about 12,000 per year. But this program will probably emphasize service to other groups when the special eligibility for refugee status of Amerasians expires.[8]

Most refugees who arrive in the United States have not been served by programs in refugee camps. Whether they have or not, they are eligible to receive support from a program of grants to the states administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) of the Department of Health and Human Services. The program provides for a maximum of eight months of income support and social services. Among the social services that may be offered is ESL instruction. Some ORR funded programs provide ESL service themselves. Most contract with local education agencies, community colleges or CBOs.[9]

Because states have considerable discretion in administering this program, ORR has no certain way of knowing how much ESL service is provided to how many people. It has been estimated that the program spent about $12 million on ESL for about 47,000 refugees in 1992.[10] The one certain thing about the Refugee Resettlement Program is that 8 months is not enough time for most refugees to learn very much English.

The primary goal of the program is to place refugees in jobs. Its operations are based on a case management system. This means that the needs of each refugee are individually assessed. Because a large portion of refugees have very limited English skills, a large percentage are placed in survival English courses for eight months, provided with some job search and pre-employment training and, where possible, placed in jobs. Priority for ESL service is usually given to refugees with the lowest levels of skills. This means that former political prisoners, who often have relatively high educational levels and currently make up a large portion of new refugees, may have a low priority for service.[11]

After leaving ORR programs, refugees are, of course, eligible for further ESL service in adult education programs and, if they qualify for welfare, through the federal JOBS program. Exactly how many of them take these paths is not known, but in a few locations both JOBS and adult education are dominated by refugees.

The short duration and lack of systematic follow-up by ORR language programs is certainly disappointing. Symbolically as well as practically, these programs play an important role. Refugees are the one group of immigrants that we specifically invite to live in this country. This humanitarian gesture to oppressed people should be a source of national pride. Many refugees have very limited English skills, come from cultures very different from ours and have been through dreadful experiences. It is shameful that we follow up our noble gesture with only eight months of education service provided by ORR programs.

2. JOBS. The 1988 Family Support Act (welfare reform) created the federal-state JOBS program, and authorized federal funding that averages about $1 billion per year to support it. State welfare departments administer the program and states must provide matching funds at various rates to receive federal support. The aim of the program is to help recipients of Aid to Families With Dependant Children (AFDC, or "welfare") to become self-sufficient through a combination of collecting child support from absent parents, education and job-placement services. In practice, about half of the approximately 300,000 welfare recipients receiving service from JOBS each year are placed in adult education classes, because welfare officials determine that their basic skills are so low that they are not employable in jobs that would allow them to become independent of welfare.[12]

Although authorities disagree on the exact figures, it appears that immigrants have either about the same rate of enrollment in the AFDC as do native-born Americans, or a somewhat lower rate.[13] Regardless of which contention is true, in states with large immigrant populations, the number of immigrants receiving welfare is substantial, and many have very limited English skills. In these circumstances, JOBS programs should be providing a substantial amount of ESL instruction, and some do.

The federal government does not collect data on ESL service by JOBS, nor do most states. Nevertheless, JOBS officials consistently report that they systematically underserve AFDC recipients with limited English abilities,[14] either by not admitting them to the JOBS program or by placing them in job search and placement activities, rather than education programs. The state data available bears out these contentions. For example, in California during the 1991 program year, 18 percent of AFDC recipients lived in households where Spanish is the predominant language, but only 9.6 percent of the people served by JOBS came from Spanish speaking households.

Apparently, the reason why JOBS programs weed out many limited English welfare recipients is that there has been pressure from the federal and state governments to place JOBS participants in employment as quickly as possible. Because it takes people with very limited English a long time to increase their abilities to the levels required for jobs that pay reasonable wages, many JOBS officials are reluctant to assign welfare recipients to what one official called, "the black hole of ESL."

Moreover, when ESL service is provided, it is rarely targeted on helping limited English welfare recipients become employable. It is ironic that, despite the large federal appropriation for JOBS, most educational services offered under the program are primarily supported by state and federal adult education funds and provided by the same agencies that provide other ABE and ESL service.[15] As a result, the ESL service provided is almost always the same multi-level general ESL instruction that is offered by these agencies. There is rarely any special emphasis on language and literacy skills for employment. In a few locations, programs that integrate ESL into skills training have been made available to JOBS participants, but there is no reliable information on whether this is a growing trend.

JOBS was intended to be an opportunity program to help dependant people escape welfare. It could provide opportunity for many people with limited English abilities. The fact that it has not achieved its potential in this regard deserves serious attention.

3. JTPA. The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) is a $3 billion federal program that provides education, training and job placement to "economically disadvantaged" youth and adults through funding 640 Private Industry Councils (PICs) that operate the program in local Service Delivery Areas (SDAs).

JTPA supports several different programs, each of which serves a different target population. Most service to adults is supported by Title II-A of the Act. In 1991 funding for this Title was about $1 billion, and approximately 704,000 adults were served.

Because many limited English proficient adults qualify under the program's definition of "economically disadvantaged," it might be expected that JTPA would be a major source of ESL and other services to this population. It is not. Although the data on JTPA service nationwide is spotty, all estimates agree that limited English adults are seriously underserved by the program. For example, the United States Department of Labor estimates that in 1991, approximately 17,000 limited English adults were served under Title II-A. This is about 2.4 percent of the adults served: much smaller than the percentage of limited English proficient adults in the American population as a whole. However, using the program's definition of "economically disadvantaged" limited English speakers constitute 16-21 percent of the population eligible for JTPA service. As a result, this population appears to be greatly underrepresented in JTPA programs.

Moreover, the fact that some limited English adults are enrolled does not mean that they receive any, or very much, ESL instruction related to their employment goals. Most JTPA programs provide only a few months or a year of training. This training may not include ESL instruction for those who need it (there appears to be no data on this point), and even if it does, the limited duration of training makes it unlikely that limited English adults will increase their language and literacy skills very much.

In addition, many JTPA participants are placed in "on the job training." This arrangement gives employers much of the responsibility for insuring that participants receive the training they require. As noted above, employers are only beginning to become aware of the need to offer ESL instruction to their workers. There is no information about whether they are more likely to offer this service to JTPA participants, but it seems doubtful that they are. As a result, it is possible that a significant portion of limited English adults served by JTPA are placed in jobs that require only limited English. For them, participation in the program will have led to little or no increase in their language and literacy skills.

JTPA makes a more important contribution to serving limited English adults through Title IV of the program, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program. According to the Department of Labor, this program served about 48,000 people in 1991, many of whom had limited English abilities, at a cost of $7.3 million. The farmworkers program provides ESL service, and although it has been criticized on many fronts, it is clearly a step in the right direction. But only a small percentage of limited English adults are migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Most live and work in urban areas.

As a result, JTPA can only make a significant contribution to meeting the nation's needs for ESL service if it can serve more of the population in need of ESL instruction through the Title II-A program.

According to JTPA officials and others knowledgeable about the program, the primary reason why it underserves limited English adults is the same as the reason why JOBS does so. The regulations that govern JTPA create strong incentives to place participants in employment as quickly as possible, and adults with limited English will require longer periods of education and training, on average, than native-speakers. As a result, they are simply not selected for JTPA programs. In many areas, SDA administrators have erected formal standards that most limited English speakers cannot meet, such as requirements that only people who can pass an English reading test at the 6th to 9th grade levels (depending on the SDA) will be admitted to the program.

A few PICs are beginning to recognize the problem of underserving limited English adults. In areas with high concentrations of this population, some are working with CBOs that specialize in VESL or other forms of job training that integrates language and literacy instruction. Nationwide, the major JTPA adult program can and should do better. It can and should serve limited English adults at least in proportion to their representation in the population in need. Regulations that prevent this should be revised, and new service strategies should be developed.

4. Vocational education. "Vocational education" is a term that covers a large spectrum of services from classes in auto mechanics and "tech-prep" programs for high school students to advanced technical training at the secondary and postsecondary level. The National Association of State Directors of Vocational and Technical Education estimates that about $13 billion was spent on vocational education in 1992. According to the United States Department of Education, about 16.7 million students were served in these programs.

The lion's share of this funding comes from state and local governments. The major federal program specifically targeted on vocational education is the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, which has provided about $1 billion per year in grants to states in recent years.

The federal government does not gather data on how many adults are served by vocational education programs or how many receive ESL instruction in these programs, and no other source seems to be able to make a reliable estimate. Most observers agree that the vast majority of vocational funds are used to serve high school students, and both the number of adults served and the amount of adult ESL instruction provided are comparatively small.

At least some observers believe that a major reason why vocational education funds support very little ESL instruction is that 1992 regulations implementing the Perkins Act effectively preclude service to many students who may need language and literacy instruction. The net effect of these regulations is that programs supported by Perkins Act funds can only provide ESL service (and other types of service for special populations) if the ESL class is a direct step in completing a vocational program. Under the language of the Perkins Act, funds could be used to provide special populations "with equal access to and services they need to succeed in the full range of vocational programs offered."[16] Based on this language, funds could arguably be used to support for-credit ESL classes, which a student may have to take to gain the language and literacy needed to complete a vocational program, or for VESL or workplace programs that incorporate ESL with workforce training.

It appears that a significant amount of the adult service supported by vocational education funds is provided by community colleges. Many of their offerings can be classified as "vocational," and apparently they receive at least some vocational education funds to support these efforts, although the pattern of funding differs from state to state and institution to institution. No one knows how large a role vocational funds play in supporting ESL instruction in community colleges, but it appears that many institutions use at least some of these funds to support for-credit ESL, workplace education and other services that assist limited English adults. To the extent that vocational funds are used in this way, the resulting service pattern is described in the discussion of for-credit ESL above.

Given its broad goals of preparing workers for the high skilled occupations that are critical to the nation's economic future, vocational education programs should serve as a natural transmission belt of opportunity for adults with limited proficiency in English. By all indications, these programs play a very minor role in assisting limited English adults, at least in part because of restrictions on the use of funds. The restrictions should be lifted, and vocational educators should be more active in launching programs like VESL that integrate ESL and vocational training. Because of the large amount of funding available and the fact that vocational training could expand the opportunities of many adults with limited English proficiency, the program should be a major source of support for ESL and other services these adults need.

The potential of vocational education in this respect is demonstrated by the small Bilingual Vocational Training (BVT) program, which is a part of the Perkins Act. It spends about $2.2 million per year in direct grants to programs that provide vocational education to limited English adults. In 1994, the program expects to serve between 1,600 and 2,000 adults with programs specially tailored to their needs. The lessons learned through this program should be applied to the larger state grant program of the Perkins Act, or the BVT program should be enlarged.

5. Family Literacy. The federal government provides $100 million per year to support family literacy programs under the Even Start Program. As mentioned above, very few family literacy programs serve limited English parents. For some years, the Department of Education has operated a special Family English Language Program that provides grants to school districts and CBOs to support family literacy services for this population. In Fiscal Year 1993, the budget for this program was $6.2 million. For all the reasons mentioned above, family literacy would seem to have an important contribution to make to families where English proficiency is a problem. The systematic neglect of these families should be rectified by regulations governing Even Start, or by legislation.

6. Workplace Education. The federal government's only systematic contribution to workplace education is the National Workplace Literacy Program administered by the United States Department of Education. In recent years it has been funded at about $20 million per year. This is a competitive grant program by which grants for workplace education are made to partnerships of educational providers (both public providers and CBOs) with companies and unions. During its five-year lifetime, the program has funded 258 projects. Ten percent of the projects funded have been exclusively ESL training projects, and an additional 39 percent have included some ESL students. Average grants have been in the neighborhood of $300,000, and beginning in fiscal year 1994, grants will have three-year durations.

The Workplace Literacy Program clearly has not neglected ESL, although there has not yet been a comprehensive evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the services offered. Pending such an evaluation, the major concern about the program is that $20 million is a tiny amount of money to address the country's workplace education needs. Moreover, there is a lingering concern that most ESL workplace education programs are very limited in their objectives and benefits to both workers and companies. Either a great deal more funding must be provided for workplace education, or another strategy for using the available funds must be found, or both.

7. Other initiatives. Many states have special grant programs of their own that channel some funds to ESL. For example, Illinois has a small grant program for workplace literacy that supports some ESL training, and ESL may receive some of the discretionary funds provided to states by the JTPA program. In addition, New York and a few other cities provide some funding for "adult literacy," including ESL. Some cities also use small amounts of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support adult education. Finally, federal, state and many local governments support education programs for prisoners in corrections institutions, and funding for these programs often supports adult education services, including ESL. While these special pots of state and local funding are fairly small, they can make a major difference to particular localities and programs.

Sadly, private philanthropy has taken little notice of adult ESL. There is no major private foundation that provides regular funding in this area. Nevertheless, some projects are occasionally funded, and some foundations provide small amounts to CBOs, often in their local communities. Moreover, philanthropy for adult education in any form has been falling off in recent years. As a result, the benefits that ESL programs may have derived from being covered by the "literacy" label, when literacy was a "hot topic" for foundations, have largely disappeared.

A few foundations have begun to recognize the national significance of immigration. It is surprising that more have not recognized the implications of the language and literacy problems of immigrants and developed programs to address them.

THE SERVICE SYSTEM IN SUM

As the thumbnail sketch above indicates, the adult ESL service system is a sprawling maze of funding streams, providers and regulations. The $700 million or more it consumes is spread very wide and thin. Authority is so widely distributed that is no one in charge of adult ESL service as a whole at the federal, state or local level. No one is even responsible for overseeing any large part of the service system, with the exception of programs funded by the Adult Education Act. As a result, even elementary data are not collected, and system or program planning is erratic at best. Judging from the topography of funding and provision, ESL looks very much like an afterthought of both funders and a great many providers.

At best, ESL is always a guest in someone else's house. The largest funding streams place it in competition with ABE and other adult services. Most of the providers who receive support from those funding streams are primarily in some business other than any form of adult education: school districts are primarily concerned with children, and community colleges are primarily concerned with their regular course offerings. As a result, ESL is buried deep in the recesses of almost every bureaucracy and gets second or third-priority attention, despite the fact that it is one of the fastest growing areas of the education field.

Adult ESL is decidedly a second class citizen in other large education and training programs. Adults with limited English proficiency are underserved in JOBS, JTPA and Even Start, and they are apparently underserved in vocational education programs as well. Only a few small, highly targeted programs give ESL its due.

In short, ESL has no firm financial or institutional base of its own. The consequences of this for the quality of ESL service and the difficulties of improving it will become apparent in the following sections.

But several consequences should also be clear. To begin with, the diversity of funding streams is not only a problem for CBOs, as noted. It is a problem for most programs. In their scramble to meet the growing demand for service, most programs reach out for bits and pieces of JTPA, JOBS, vocational education and other streams of funding. Most of these sources of support are one-year grant programs or contracts, and the distribution of major funding streams differs from year to year. This combination of short-term funding from multiple sources makes all aspects of program planning and development a haphazard business.

Instability of support, together with the lack of a financial and institutional core for ESL encourage most providers to play it safe. The dominance of survival and life skills curricula as well as the multi-level design testify to the fact that few programs feel secure enough to innovate: to develop programs that will better meet the highly specialized needs of their highly specialized clientele.

And innovation is desperately needed, as the following sections will show.

Chapter Five

Meeting the Need?

DOES ESL WORK?

The nation's system for providing ESL service is highly complex and disorderly in the extreme. But that does not mean that it is ineffective. Most social, economic and political systems are seemingly complex and untidy, and many work tolerably well.

Unfortunately, as with every other aspect of ESL, there is a paucity of hard data that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the system. But the data that do exist confirm the impressions of most observers that, taken as a whole, the nation's ESL system is not very effective in meeting the nation's needs. The best that can be said is that almost all aspects of it are in need of major improvement.

Obviously, the effectiveness of the system must be judged in terms of some clear idea of its goals. Since no one is in charge of, or speaks for, the ESL system as a whole, and few people think about it in its totality, there are no professed "official goals." Individual programs usually state their goals as "providing service" of a particular type to some target group, without stipulating how much service or with what result. Obviously, the system provides service to large numbers of people, but that is too easy a standard. A more meaningful question is whether it serves enough people and whether it serves them effectively.

In terms of quantity of service, the ESL service system gets mixed marks. As mentioned above, the ESL system falls far short of meeting the demand for ESL service. There are long waiting lists at most programs that keep waiting lists, as well as indications that many adults are discouraged from seeking service because they do not think they can find seats in programs, or because they think the service will not meet their needs. In terms of meeting demand, then, the ESL system is only a partial success.

At first glance, the ESL system may appear to be more successful in meeting the need for service, but closer scrutiny dispels this impression. Obviously, it does not serve all 12-14 million people in need of service each year, and no one would expect this to occur. But it does serve an estimated 1.8 million people. That is a fairly large number. More importantly, by the very highest estimates only about 700,000 limited English proficient adults enter the United States each year.[1] As a result, the ESL system presently serves a population that is more than twice as large as the yearly increase in people needing service.

But how well does it serve these people? Many standards could be used to evaluate quality of service. But one standard is of special interest if the ESL system is viewed from a national perspective: does the system reduce the number of limited English proficient adults in the United States?

If the ESL system serves adults at twice the rate that the need for service increases each year, as indicated above, then we would expect the total number of limited English proficient adults to be decreasing. But this is not the case. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of people needing service increased from 8.5 million to 12 million, using the same method of estimation in both years, or from 8.5 million in 1980 to 14 million in 1991, using different measures for the benchmark years.[2]

Of course, this disparity between numbers served and the increase in need could simply be an historical artifact. Perhaps we served many fewer people during most of the 1980s than we do today and we are only beginning to catch up on the backlog. In part, this is true. We did serve fewer people in the early 1980s.[3] However, immigration flows were smaller then than they are today.

The fact of the matter is that, between 1980 and 1990, immigration from non-English speaking countries increased from 480,000 adults in 1980 to 641,000 adults in 1990. But the number of people served by ESL programs also increased. ESL enrollments in programs funded by the Adult Education Act alone almost tripled during the same decade, increasing from an estimated 396,000 in 1980 to an estimated 1.19 million in 1990. The increase was fairly gradual, with occasional annual setbacks and advances.

That is, programs funded by the Adult Education Act alone enrolled almost as many people in ESL classes in 1980 as the total number of adults from non-English speaking nations who entered the country in that year, and by the end of the decade they were enrolling almost twice as many people as the number of adults from non-English speaking nations who entered. In total between 1980 and 1990, 6.3 million adult immigrants entered this country from non-English speaking countries and adult education programs alone served approximately 8.5 million ESL students. Moreover, during this decade, JTPA, JOBS and other programs that provide at least some service to ESL students came on line, the Amnesty program provided ESL service to approximately one million people, refugee programs were even more active than they are now, and community colleges were providing for-credit ESL. By the lowest possible estimate, at least 10 million people were served by the ESL system between 1980 and 1990.

In these circumstances, how can it be that the number of limited English adults increased by 3.5 million? This must be because a great many limited English adults who enrolled in ESL programs did not improve their English abilities to the point where they regarded themselves as able to speak English "very well" and where they scored at very high levels by most other measures of proficiency.

To put this point differently, if 6.3 million non-native English speaking adults entered this country between 1980 and 1990, and none of them became proficient in English, then the increase in limited English proficient adults would have been 6.3 million (or slightly more, allowing for limited proficient children of these immigrants who passed into adulthood during the decade). In fact, the increase was only about 3.5 million. Giving all the credit for the fact that 2.8 million adults apparently became proficient in English during the decade to ESL classes (and ignoring the fact that some learning takes place outside programs), then we can say that the ESL system was about 50 percent effective in meeting the increase in need for ESL, and did not reduce the residual need (the 8.5 million people who were limited English proficient in 1980) at all.

Conversely, if all of the estimated 10 million people who attended ESL and other classes during the decade had become proficient in English, then most of the limited English problem in the United States would have disappeared. If all of these 10 million people had become proficient, then two thirds of the total population in need of service (the 8.5 million who were limited in proficiency in 1980 and the 6.3 million who entered in the following decade) would have become proficient.

These approximations from aggregate numbers only bear out the story that reports from various programs have told for many years. Except that the program reports are worse. As mentioned, about two-thirds of ESL students are in the lowest level English classes. While retention in ESL programs funded by the Adult Education Act is higher than in ABE programs, only about 25 percent of students remain enrolled for as long as one year.[4] Since, on average, most classes meet six hours per week and recess for the summer, this means that at most the majority of ESL students get 100-200 hours of instruction, and most get far less. By the estimates of most professionals, this is about enough to move them up one level in a multi-level class.

That is, at most, the two-thirds of ESL students in the lowest level move from very limited abilities in speaking, understanding, reading or writing English to a level at which they can perform these functions to some extent, but not very well. Correspondingly, the smaller number of students who enter at more advanced levels of proficiency may move from speaking, understanding, reading and writing English "well" to performing some of these functions "very well."

In short, the ESL system may be successful in boosting students that bring a fairly good background in English and a good educational background to a level of proficiency that is quite high. But for the vast majority of students who bring little English background with them and have low educational levels, it only provides enough English to get by.

The most compelling evidence on this point is the story of Amnesty students in California. The state of California provided ESL service to more than half the total number of students served by Amnesty, and it measured their level of English proficiency after they had completed instruction by a standardized test. It found that 80 percent of those served still fell below the standard cut-off point that the state uses to measure functional literacy in English.[5]

In sum, by all indications the quantity of adult ESL service is not adequate to meet the national demand. If the quality of service was high enough, however, the ESL system might be able to meet the nation's need for service over the coming years, because the system enrolls people in classes at more than twice the rate that the need for service increases each year.

But the ESL system does not lead to large gains in proficiency by most students, and the number of limited English proficient adults has increased in recent years. As a result, there must be serious problems with the quality of service. And, by all indications, there are. There are problems both in the conceptual framework that underlies most ESL programs as well as in many aspects of how they are designed and operate. The first problem is easily stated. The others require a longer explanation.

THE LINEAR PARADIGM

The Paradigm. An overriding difficulty of the ESL system in America is that it is not designed to optimally meet the needs of the population it is intended to serve. There are a great many respects in which this is true. But one of the most serious mismatches between system and needs arises from the linear design of most ESL programs. It is highly unlikely that most adults will learn very much from programs designed in this way. This should not be surprising. Because, ultimately, the linear design is based on an instructional paradigm developed for children, and it is a paradigm that even elementary and secondary educators are starting to question.

The linear model is best exemplified in the multi-level programs that make up the bulk of ESL service. In these programs, language and literacy acquisition is seen as a sequence of gaining increasingly difficult skills in the four core areas of speaking, understanding, reading and writing. Gaining language proficiency is synonymous with completing the sequence, and in most cases, the same sequence is prescribed for everyone who has limited abilities in English. The only difference is where in the sequence (at what step) people enter an ESL program. Hence, the typical program is divided into three levels in which people will learn skills that are often labelled with terms such as "beginning," "intermediate," and "advanced." If for-credit ESL is seen as part of this system, it might be labeled "very advanced."

Experts on ESL debate exactly what these levels should be and how best to teach students who have various degrees of proficiency. In fact, a large part of the intellectual life of the field consists of finding ways to improve instruction within the framework of the linear design.

At first glance, this design seems to make common sense. After all, it is the way that we are accustomed to think about educating children. In elementary school, children are presumed to know very little about academic subjects, so we begin by teaching them simple and essential foundation skills and information. We teach them "the three R's" plus a little elementary history, geography, science, and perhaps other subjects. By the time they reach middle school, we up the ante and begin to teach them more advanced mathematics, literature and composition, along with more in-depth content in other subjects. In high school we up the ante again on all of these fronts. Then they are "done," unless they want to become "very proficient" in some aspect of their studies by postsecondary education.

Although it seems to make sense, there are several problems with this model when it is applied to adults in ESL classes (and many people would say there are problems with applying it to children, too). First, children are a captive audience in school for at least 10-12 years. Virtually all adults have other things to do with their lives than attend ESL classes, even on a part-time basis. We are lucky if students enroll on a continuous basis for even one year. This does not speak badly of their motivation. It simply reflects the realities of adult lives and responsibilities.

Time is the great enemy of the linear model for adults. Most adults simply will not and cannot attend class long enough on a continuous basis to progress very far in the sequence. This is particularly problematical for very low-proficiency adults, who make up the majority of ESL students. To complete the instructional sequence of most programs would, in the best of circumstances, take them several years. Because of all the other demands on their time, they rarely make such an investment.

And this illustrates another problem with the linear model. Although most ESL students say that they come to class simply "to learn English," closer questioning and even rudimentary tracking of their careers indicates that their motivations are more complex than that. They want to learn English for some purpose: to survive in a strange land, to get a better job, to help their children, to get into college, and so forth. Their goal is not just to "get better" at English language and literacy; it is to achieve one or more of these goals. Beyond a certain point, simply "getting better" loses its charm, unless the purposes are achieved.

But the primary goal of most multi-step programs is, purely and simply, to help learners perfect what are presumed to be general English skills: to "get better" in English for as long as it takes. In recent years there has been a movement toward "competency-based instruction" in the ESL field that may seem to contradict this point. The idea behind the competency-based movement is that the sequence of instruction should help people to progress in terms of being able to do increasingly difficult real world tasks, rather than simply to acquire more advanced language skills.

But, welcome as it is, competency-based education is, in practice, too often simply a refinement on the linear model. The competencies taught cover virtually every aspect of life, they are arranged in sequence, and the sequences take a very long time to complete. General language ability has been replaced by general competency as the guiding star of many programs. But the problem of the linear model remains: most people don't want to take years learning something general; they want to learn something in particular.

This desire to achieve real world goals by ESL instruction explains both the success and the failure of "survival" or "lifeskills" English. In about the amount of time most people are willing to devote to ESL classes it is possible to teach newcomers to America something they very much want to learn: how to cope at a minimal level with the problems of everyday living in this country. That is the success. The failure is that, having achieved this, most survival English students drop out, rather than face up to years of further instruction that will simply teach them "more."

The same desire for real world accomplishment also explains the success of upper level ESL classes. By definition, people who are enrolled in these classes have fairly good English skills. Many wish to move on to courses of higher education that require completion of upper level ESL instruction, and many others wish to apply for jobs that require the higher levels of English proficiency that upper level classes can help them attain. In short, many students in upper level ESL classes are near the finishing post in terms of achieving real world goals, and it should not be surprising that many of them persist to the end.

And, by implication, the desire for real world achievement explains the missing middle of ESL instruction — the relatively few students at the intermediate levels. Low level learners do not move up, and the distance is very far from path to reward for people who might enter classes at the middle levels.

In short, a major problem with the linear model is that it presents the vast majority of students (those who have very limited skills) with an undifferentiated landscape in terms of achieving real world goals once they pass the lowest levels of instruction. They must take it on faith that "more is better," or at least that more is worth the investment of their time. Children have no choice but to make this leap of faith; adults can just opt out.

Time and a lack of connection to adult goals defeat the linear model. Together they are among the major factors that explain the lack of effectiveness of the nation's ESL system.

Paradigm Shift. But by what standards is the ESL system ineffective? In that question lies the answer to the problems to the linear paradigm.

There are many standards by which English language and literacy proficiency might be assessed. By almost any standards, the 12-14 million people classified as limited English proficient do not have the abilities that allow them to fare very well in American social and economic life. As a result, it is reasonable to judge the effectiveness of the nation's ESL effort, at least in part, by the standard of whether the number of limited English proficient adults is increasing or decreasing. And this is particularly reasonable, because multi-level linear programs are designed to move students through a sequence of instruction that will eventually lead to a fairly high level of English proficiency. If they were wholly effective in moving students through that sequence, these programs would, in fact, reduce the number of limited English proficient adults.

But perhaps we are wrong to focus too much on the standard of reducing the number of limited English proficient adults. In particular, perhaps we are wrong to focus too much on whether we help these adults to gain the overall levels of English skills they need to overcome the social and economic problems they face. After all, there are a great many aspects of American social and economic life, and a great many skills required for each. Suppose we changed our focus from constructing programs that would help limited English adults gain the skills they need for everything and concentrated instead on constructing programs that would help them gain the skills they need for particular purposes, at least in the first instance. Most learners say that they want to improve their English for one or more particular purposes. And, interestingly, their goals often evolve and become more ambitious over time as their English proficiency increases.

Following this line of thinking, we might imagine not a single sequence of instruction, but a series of modules, each of limited duration and each targeted at gaining English proficiency for some particular purpose. And instead of assuming that people will learn English in one long, unbroken sequence of instruction, we might imagine that they will learn English on an intermittent basis: by returning to ESL classes to improve their skills for a particular purpose whenever they feel the need for improvement. For example, they might feel blocked in their job and wish to return to learn English skills that will help them at work. Or they might become concerned about their limited English as their children grow older. As their skills improve for one or more different purposes, they may begin to gain an approximation of greater proficiency across the board. This, in turn, may lead them to more ambitious goals, like learning the English required to go to college.

In a sense, however, a system of the sort imagined would not regard any goals as more or less ambitious. Its purposes would be achieved as long as people could have access to the type of ESL instruction they need and want for the real world purposes that they need and want it.

Is such a system possible? Of course it is. It simply involves moving what are now regarded as marginal, or "special emphasis," aspects of the present ESL system to center stage and creating more of them. We know that we can significantly increase English proficiency for work in fairly short periods of time though VESL programs, workplace literacy programs and other means. There are indications that we can increase English for parenting through family literacy programs. There is a long history of teaching English for citizenship. There seems to be no good reason why "pre-academic" and "for-credit" ESL classes should not focus on the core skills needed for particular areas of study.

In short, there are many reasons to believe that we can construct a goal-driven, modularized system. We are already halfway there.

But the ESL field will never get all the way there unless it accepts a paradigm shift: from the generalized linear model to a more modularized goal-driven model, at least at the intermediate level. The rationale for doing so is simple: the new paradigm would be better designed to give people what they want and what they will accept in ESL instruction. Consequently, it is better designed to meet their needs and the nation's needs, as well as to increase the effectiveness of ESL instruction in a meaningful way. The exact design of a modularized system is beyond the scope of this discussion. But it should not be beyond the scope of discussion of the ESL field.

This does not mean that the linear model should be scrapped altogether. Apparently it serves the wants and needs of some portion of the population in need of service. It should be an option. And it might be viewed as a fallback position for both individual learners and providers. Instruction in one of the "level" classes for a period of time might be a precondition for instruction focused on at least some of the modular goals. For example many multi-level programs do, in fact, provide a sound foundation in language and literacy for academic study.

This paradigm shift may not be the only answer to the problems of the linear model, but it appears to be a reasonable answer, and it would build on intellectual capital that the ESL field is already acquiring. Certainly the problems of the existing paradigm require some solution if the effectiveness of ESL instruction is to increase. Absent a better strategy for overcoming those problems, ESL programs should focus their energies more on the specialized areas of instruction that have been gathering strength for some time, and less on the linear model of instruction.

But even if a paradigm shift of the sort just discussed were to occur, the ESL field would face a large number of other fundamental problems that must be solved if the quality of instruction it offers is to be increased to a level that meets the needs of learners and the nation as a whole. Those problems are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Six

The Challenge for Programs

The shortcomings of the ESL field manifest themselves most strongly on the program level. Here, the fragmentation of the system has impeded transitions between providers, and indifference to language testing issues has resulted in assessment and evaluation frameworks that serve neither policy makers, programs, nor funders very well. The marginalization of the field is reflected in a lack of standards for teaching, and the generic ESL curriculum has made it difficult to meet the needs of learners with special needs. Finally, inadequate resources have prevented programs and learners from getting the guidance they need so that they can make informed decisions about technology.[*]

This chapter discusses five major problems that affect the effectiveness of programs: (1) facilitating transition; (2) resolving testing and assessment issues; (3) dealing with staffing problems; (4) meeting learner needs and goals; and (5) providing access to technology. Each section examines the problems that programs face and explains the reasons why these problems exist.

BEYOND ESL: TRANSITION

Although the adult ESL service system offers many levels of instruction and includes a wide variety of providers, the transition of learners from level to level or from one agency to another is rare. Students from adult schools seldom make successful transitions to community college programs, and students who transfer from non-credit ESL to academic or vocational programs are the exception rather than the rule.

It is difficult to determine exactly how many students fail to make successful transitions, because most programs do not keep records that might indicate what programs their students have attended, what their educational goals are or where they end up after they leave the program. But informal evidence from the field about problems of transition has been sufficiently alarming that demonstration projects designed to facilitate transition have been funded by several state and federal agencies.[1]

---

[*] A more extensive discussion of these issues appears in a companion volume: "A Spark of Excellence: Program Realities and Promising Practices in Adult ESL." This publication also includes promising practices, innovative approaches and recommendations for the problems outlined in this section.

ESL students do not make transitions for a number of reasons. The most significant barriers occur on three levels: at the levels of the individual learner, the programs (both sending and receiving), and the system overall.[2] Unless obstacles at all three levels are overcome and barriers are reduced, students who are capable of advancing will fail to do so, and they may drop out of the ESL system entirely because they cannot negotiate its various gate-keeping points.

Student Barriers

In trying to move through the adult ESL system, second language learners must deal with both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that make transition difficult. Intrinsic barriers, sometimes called "disposition" factors, include low self-esteem and low expectations. For example, many ESL learners have been convinced that they are not college material, and many have not yet considered what their educational and other goals might be beyond improving their English. Extrinsic barriers are obstacles such as work or family obligations that make a sustained commitment to education difficult, lack of financial resources (for books, transportation and tuition), and lack of available childcare.

A lack of familiarity with various aspects of the educational system (such as registration processes, admission or eligibility requirements) and lack of knowledge about support services such as financial aid and academic counseling also keep students out of "next step programs" as receiving programs are often called. Finally, inadequate preparation in the higher order literacy skills needed for academic study often serves to keep learners out of academic, vocational and job training programs.

Program Barriers

Although failure to make transitions is often ascribed to learner factors, program barriers may be even more powerful in preventing students from moving through the system. These barriers exist at both the sending and the receiving institutions. In both cases, negative attitudes and lack of knowledge about educational options prevent transition.

Discouraging Attitudes. In both sending and receiving institutions, officials sometimes state that students do not want to make transitions, and that those who plan to advance beyond their current levels may have unrealistic goals.[3] Administrators in sending programs often point out that most of their learners only want to learn a little more English and have no educational plans beyond ESL. Since students are not expected to advance, no efforts are made to help them move on or investigate why transition does not occur. As a result, lack of transition becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

More well-meaning is the tendency of some teachers to hold on to their ESL students longer than necessary, creating a place for them that is so comfortable and secure, that it becomes difficult for students to leave the nest.[4] Since teachers and learners become attached to each other, it is not uncommon for teachers to complain about "losing" their students to another program, even in cases where the student might be better served someplace else.

Although there are strong exceptions, many receiving programs, particularly those that do not focus on ESL, are less than eager to see ESL students enroll in their program.[5] It is not unusual to find teachers in academic, vocational, or job training programs who are reluctant to serve ESL students and would like to see them stay in ESL programs until they are fully proficient. Many of these teachers feel that they should not be required to teach students who are not fluent, because these students may require special attention.[6] Taken together, the prevailing attitudes discourage the advancement of ESL students through the system.

Lack of Knowledge About Options. A major reason why transition is not taking place is that programs often lack adequate knowledge about the educational options available to their ESL students. As a rule, teachers in general ESL adult education programs know very little about programs outside of their system. Many ESL teachers have never heard of training programs sponsored by JOBS or JTPA. They are not aware that their local community college might have vocational education certificate programs that offer bilingual support, or that their local job training center may provide childcare for parents who sign up for the JOBS program. Neither are they likely to know about the participatory ESL literacy programs offered in some CBOs.

Even those who know that these programs exist are often overwhelmed by the eligibility requirements. As one coordinator explained, "We tell our teachers not to discuss JTPA because it is too difficult to keep the requirements straight."[7] Similarly, part-time teachers in non-credit ESL programs at community colleges often do not know details about the admissions requirements, testing processes, and placement procedures that control access to the courses of study ESL students would like to attend. Most importantly, many ESL teachers are not aware that it is no longer permissible for community colleges to place language minority students in mandatory ESL programs based on test results alone.[8]

Because many students rely on teachers as their main source of information about education, this lack of knowledge seriously hurts their chances of learning about the educational options available to them. Unless they have a network of friends and acquaintances who understand next step programs, it is impossible for most students to make informed decisions about their future.

Lack of Curriculum Articulation. Even in cases where both ESL students and their teachers are aware of next step programs, transition may be difficult because there is no continuum of services that would allow ESL students to move from one agency to the next. In fact, there is often a large gap between the knowledge, skills and strategies provided by one type of agency and the language proficiency expected at the next-step program.

The results of this lack of articulation are quite disturbing. Students who "graduate" from the highest level of adult schools (and are considered academically prepared by their teachers) may be told they have to start over in a non-academic college class, and students who finish several semesters of non-credit ESL in a community college are often advised to start over in the lowest level of for-credit ESL, because they lack the foundation in grammar on which progress in for-credit ESL depends.[9]

Competition For Students. In areas where program funding is linked to contact hours or average daily attendance, transition between providers is impeded, because agencies are dependent on the funds that students generate for their programs. In these cases, self-interest on the part of the agency dictates that students should stay with one program as long as possible (because they generate funds) and should only move on after they have completed the program. For example, students who are enrolled in GED programs may not be told that they could get an Associate or professional degree at a community college without the GED, and adult schools receiving JTPA funding may not tell students that they could attend a bilingual vocational program at a local CBO.

Combined with student barriers, the lack of support for transition from both sending and receiving programs seriously inhibits the advancement of students through the ESL system, and it seriously impedes their movement out of ESL to other educational opportunities.

HOW ARE WE DOING? TESTING, ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION

By all accounts, learner assessment and program evaluation are two of the most problematic areas for ESL programs. Teachers and coordinators are dissatisfied with standardized tests and unsure of how to deal with ideas for alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation. While they support the establishment of evaluation standards that would lead to greater program accountability, they fear that the recent national emphasis on such standards will result in systems of evaluation and accountability based on standardized tests. Most teachers and coordinators believe that a system of this type would throttle innovation and creativity in strong programs and do little to strengthen weak programs. In contrast, government agencies that fund ESL service often see standardized tests as the only evaluation and accountability measure that can reasonably be enforced.

In order to overcome the fears of programs that they will be the victims of inappropriate systems of evaluation, federal and state agencies must promote the development of alternative assessment frameworks that can serve as measures of both quality and accountability.

Testing Requirements for Adult ESL

What are present testing requirements for adult education? The United States Department of Education does not mandate that all students in ABE or ESL programs must be tested.[10] It merely asks states to submit standardized test data on 20 percent of the population served. It is up to the states to decide which tests should be used for that purpose.[11]

Some federal discretionary programs, such as the National Workplace Literacy Program, have recognized that standardized tests may not be valid for the contexts in which their programs operate. As a result, they do not mandate the use of standardized tests, but merely require that testing measures be both valid and reliable. To help programs meet these requirements, they allow projects to design and field test their own assessments.

Limitations of Available Tests

There are no standardized tests on the market that can adequately measure the proficiency of the great diversity of adults who need ESL service. This is no surprise given the complexity of language skills and the range of abilities that adult learners demonstrate. Yet funders continue to insist that standardized assessments be used to judge individual learner progress, and many use such tests as measures of program effectiveness, as well. This is true in spite of the fact that the most commonly used standardized tests have severe limitations.[12]

The standardized tests used in ESL programs fall into two groups: ABE tests designed for native speakers of English and ESL tests designed for those who speak English as a second language. Most of the ABE tests were designed specifically to measure the reading abilities of students in the ABE components of adult education programs. They were not designed for use in ESL programs, although they are often used (inappropriately) in that way.

ABE Tests. The most popular of the ABE tests include the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), and the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS).[13] A new test, the Test of Applied Literacy (TALS), designed by the Educational Testing Service, has attracted a great deal of attention recently, because its design, and many of the items it contains, are closely related to the 1991 National Adult Literacy Survey. Because some state and federal officials might see this relationship as grounds for encouraging or requiring use of the TALS in adult education programs, it deserves special scrutiny.

TALS is a reading test, and it assesses reading skills by three scales: "document," "prose," and "quantitative" literacy. It uses a format that asks students to base their answers on their understanding of materials or problems they might encounter in everyday life (such as newspaper stories or tax forms). In this regard, it is a step forward from traditional multiple choice reading tests.

The TALS items are similar to those used in the NALS (see below) and it has many of the same problems when applied to limited English adults. To begin with, it requires a familiarity with American cultural norms and concepts that immigrants, and possibly other limited English speakers, are not likely to have (for example, items refer to "blue chip portfolios," and "household recycling"). In addition, it does not necessarily reflect the kinds of literacy materials that language minority adults commonly use and the ways in which they commonly use them. Finally, the complexity of the language used in the text is above the proficiency levels of many ESL students.[14] Given these limitations, many experts believe that the TALS should not be used to assess the language and literacy abilities of any but the most advanced ESL learners.

Taken as a whole, standardized ABE tests like the TABE, ABLE, CASAS and TALS have one advantage: they allow programs to compare the scores of ESL students to the scores of native speakers of English to see if certain threshold levels have been achieved. But these tests have an even greater disadvantage: they do not indicate whether the person who took the test speaks English. In essence, ABE tests miss what employers, teachers, and the students themselves, most want to know about non-native speakers of English: How well can the person communicate in English in face-to-face interactions, as well as in writing?

ESL Tests. Although they are more appropriate for use by ESL programs than the ABE tests, the standardized ESL tests that are commonly available have serious shortcomings, as well. The most popular tests include the following.

The Basic English Skills Test (BEST) provides a measure of very basic survival skills, listening comprehension, and conversational ability of those who are new to English. Yet programs report that students are often able to memorize the items and that the test is only appropriate at the lower levels. The BEST was at one time administered in almost all refugee programs, but has proved too limited for general use, although a fair number of programs report using the test for placement of students with low literacy skills.

The Comprehensive English Language Skills Assessment (CELSA), is an integrated ESL assessment which assesses how well a second language speaker can deal with written English texts representing various levels of difficulty. The test appears as the only ESL test on the list of standardized assessments approved by the State Department of Education in Illinois and has been accepted as an assessment of an ESL student's "ability to benefit," a requirement for obtaining Pell grants. The CELSA is useful inasmuch as it provides some indication on the language proficiency levels of ESL students, and it is certainly more appropriate for use in ESL programs than either the TABE, the ABLE, or even the TALS. However, it does not tell programs and funders if students can use English to achieve their own purposes in a variety of situations. Therefore, it has only limited use as an ESL proficiency assessment.

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), is the most comprehensive of the standardized ESL tests on the market. Its scores are used for admission and placement by more than 2,300 colleges in the United States, and over half a million students world wide take the test each year. The TOEFL measures some of the key aspects of English proficiency (such as listening comprehension, vocabulary, English sentence structure, reading comprehension and, as an option, oral proficiency and written expression). Because the level of difficulty of the TOEFL starts where most advanced (non-credit) courses in adult ESL end, the test is simply too difficult for the vast majority of ESL students.

While all three ESL tests discussed above have the advantage of being standardized language tests (rather than simply reading tests), none is capable of gauging how well second-language speakers can use English in real life situations. And only one, the TOEFL, includes any measure of the ability of students to express their ideas in writing.

If standardized tests are here to stay — and there is every indication that they are — language proficiency tests will need to be developed that are appropriate for the adult ESL population.

Alternative Assessment: Portfolios and Authentic Interaction Tasks

An increasing number of programs are turning to alternatives to standardized testing, because they are keenly aware that standardized tests cannot provide a full measure of a learner's language abilities. To capture all the changes in language and literacy development that occurs as a result (or a byproduct of) participation in an ESL program, a growing number of administrators and teachers are implementing alternative assessment techniques. These techniques are program-based. That is, they are designed, at least in part, to explore the relationship between what is taught in a particular program and what students learn. As a result, they have a much greater curriculum validity than most standardized tests.[15] In ESL programs, the most common of these alternative assessments are portfolios and authentic interaction tasks.

Portfolio Assessments. Portfolios represent collections of learner performance in those areas that teachers and learners have deemed important.[16] In ESL, portfolios might include any of the following: (1) audio tapes of conversations with learners or videos of a short presentation the student has given; (2) comments on stories or articles the student has read; (3) writing samples; (4) the final product of a joint project, such as a community survey or a set of language experience stories. In most programs, teacher and learner work together to select and evaluate portfolios and comment on the progress that learners have made.

Authentic Interaction Tasks. ESL programs increasingly are trying to use authentic assessments that evaluate a learner's ability to communicate in specific settings. Learners are given certain tasks while teachers and their peers observe them and comment on their progress and their performance. At the workplace, these tasks might include taking a phone message, responding to an irate customer who wants information, or designing a frequency distribution chart that represents the ages of the children of all the members of the class. These tasks differ from the competencies measured by traditional "competency-based" tests in at least two important ways: (1) Authentic task-based assessments are not pencil and paper tests; rather they require students to interact with other people and to perform tasks that have importance in their own right; (2) Evaluators and students work together to document successes and identify the difficulties students experience (for example, difficulties in understanding what was said or in getting a point across, or using a tone inappropriate for a particular context). The results of task based assessments are often captured in scaled "Can Do" lists that show whether a student can deal with certain tasks "with ease," "okay" or "with difficulty".

Limitations of Alternative Assessments. Although they have great intuitive appeal, alternative assessment measures are difficult to design and even more difficult to evaluate. For ESL programs, the greatest challenge lies in deciding which aspects of language to focus on and what measures to use to evaluate progress and achievement. Setting benchmarks (deciding what level of performance might be expected for learners in particular settings), has proved particularly difficult. Programs face the greatest challenges, however, in trying to achieve greater reliability in assessing student work and aggregating the results of the assessment so that information gathered from large groups can be reported in ways that make sense to people who are not involved in the assessment process.

In order to deal effectively with the dilemmas of testing and assessment, the adult ESL field needs strong leadership, resources and technical assistance in two areas: in the design of a series of standardized tests that can measure oral language proficiency as well as literacy; and in the development of alternative assessment systems that can be used across programs and that yield reliable information.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS)

In 1989, the Department of Education commissioned a study designed to assess the English literacy abilities of the U.S. population using a nationwide household survey. The survey conducted by the Educational Testing Service and its subcontractor, Westat, Inc., assessed the literacy skills of 26,000 adults across the nation. The survey was not designed to assess the abilities of non-native speakers of English, although non-English speakers were included in the sample.

What does the NALS tell us about the language proficiency of those who speak English as a second language? The short answer is "not enough," although more information may be available when the language minority data is analyzed in the spring of 1994. So far, we only know that 25 percent of those who scored in the lowest group of the NALS were foreign born, but we do not know anything about the nature of their difficulty with the test items. In essence, while the available NALS data tell us that millions of immigrants scored low, they do not tell why immigrants scored low or give us any clues about how to help them through improving adult ESL programs or other means.

In fact, it is doubtful whether results from the NALS can be very useful for ESL planning or evaluation, even after all the data from the survey are available. There are at least three reasons why this is the case.

First, the NALS does not tell us how well non-native speakers of English can deal with the literacy challenges they encounter in their daily lives. It only tells us how well they can read the kinds of items contained in the test. In addition, the NALS only assesses reading ability. As a result, data from the survey do not tell us how well language minorities speak English, how well they can write English, or how well they can understand spoken English in various situations. And the NALS data does not tell us how well language minority adults can use English to express their opinions and make their voices heard, skills critical for civic participation. In short, the NALS misses many of the most important aspects of English language proficiency.

Second, the NALS assumes familiarity with American culture. Many of the items represent situations that are likely to be unfamiliar to many of the foreign born. Because of the strong culture-bias of the NALS, new arrivals, in particular, are likely to score much lower than if they were given an assessment that reflects more general concepts.

Third, the NALS only assesses reading abilities in the English language. It does not tell us whether adults who speak a language other than English can read and write in their mother tongue. Thus, an immigrant with a Ph.D in nuclear physics from Russia who has not yet learned enough English to understand the items on the NALS would be counted among those who are truly non-literate.

In sum, the NALS data released so far cannot and should not be used as a basis for any kind of decision making about adult ESL, and there appear to be severe limits to how useful the results of the NALS can ever be for assessing the abilities of limited English adults. In fairness, the test was not intended to serve the needs of the adult ESL field, and it is not surprising that it does not do so.[17]

STAFFING PROBLEMS

The adult ESL field suffers from a number of different types of staffing problems that seriously limit the quality of service and the ability of the field to improve it. While some programs have teachers and administrators that are excellent, others are run by staff with little experience or expertise pertinent to adult ESL. Ultimately, a significant part of this problem is due to the large number of part-time teachers employed by many ESL programs and the insecurity of employment, as well as lack of status that results. To help ESL programs provide the service that learners need, staffing problems must be addressed from two directions: teachers must be provided with access to career ladders, and qualifications must be established for those wishing to move up that ladder. In addition, administrators and teachers must be able to participate in the kinds of professional development activities that allow them to work together to strengthen ESL services.

Staffing Patterns

Although nationwide only about 25 percent of ESL teachers are full-time employees, staffing patterns vary widely. In some areas, only 10 percent of the ESL staff have permanent positions; in others, the split is closer to 60/40. The number of full-time positions available depends on funding mandates, state and local policy, and agency constraints. It also depends on institutional policies: often administrative structures at community colleges or other large institutions limit the hiring of full-time staff, even when funds become available.[18]

ESL projects that receive discretionary funds through federal grants are often able to create full-time positions for staff who will be involved in these grants (family literacy and workplace programs are examples). However, those that depend largely on state administered adult education funds are limited in the number of full-time positions they can offer.

Many of these programs report that the pressure to provide direct services allows only a limited amount of money to be spent on permanent jobs with benefits. Program quality suffers, because part-time teachers cannot be required to participate in curriculum development and program planning without additional compensation. The push to serve as many students as possible has meant that only a limited amount of money is available to upgrade the skills of the poorer teachers and create career ladders for those who are excellent.

The decision to limit full-time employment for teachers has resulted in a vicious cycle. Because only marginal employment is available, the programs are reluctant to demand that only those who can demonstrate professional training and teaching experience have access to teaching. In addition, in many areas programs would have difficulties finding teachers with certificates or degrees in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). But because most states require no ESL qualifications to teach adult ESL (although particular institutions might), the adult ESL field attracts many practitioners who have neither training in second language teaching nor experience working with adults.

Administrators

What about the quality of administrators in ESL programs? As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the quality of the administrative staff in the ESL field is also very uneven, ranging from directors who are highly qualified to those who are unfamiliar with key ESL issues. Researchers have found that many high quality programs depend on a program director who acts as a guiding light and manages to secure funding, procure resources, motivate staff, coordinate services, and spend "quality time" with students who come to the office.[19] The best of these administrators also involve learners and staff in program decisions and know how to work effectively with policy makers and funders.

Administrators who are strongly committed to adult ESL are the exception, rather than the rule. Since most directors have only part-time responsibility for ESL, they are often not aware of the key components that define a good second language program. As a result, issues specific to ESL (such as the need for bilingual support staff, the importance of assessing both English proficiency and native language literacy, or the necessity to hire teachers who can combine second language development with literacy teaching) are often neglected by administrators whose only experience has been with ABE programs.

Support Staff

The quality of an ESL program is as much defined by the quality of its support staff as by the quality of its teachers. Minimally, ESL programs should include a bilingual intake worker who can put learners at ease and answer all questions in a language that students can understand. (Programs who serve many different language communities often have several aides from the community or ask advanced students to translate for some of the less common languages.) Bilingual intake workers can learn how to administer a literacy assessment in the native language of the learner and gather background information on educational experience, work history, present life circumstances and future goals. Although many ESL programs do not offer translation assistance, it is difficult to see how ESL programs can do an adequate job of needs assessment, goal setting and literacy testing if students are asked to explain their circumstances in a language that they have not yet mastered.

Staff Qualifications and Development

Few ESL teachers have formal credentials attesting that they are qualified to teach ESL to adults. Yet many of these teachers can be considered professionals.[20] A great many are committed to their work. They attend conferences and workshops and spend time developing curricula, planning alternative assessments, and collecting materials for their classes. This group represents a talent pool that has not been used to full advantage.[21] Since many of these teachers are "self-starters" when it comes to professional development, the challenge lies less in upgrading their skills than in supporting their creativity and providing them with access to career ladders so they will continue to work in the field and contribute to its success.

Although some ESL teachers represent the best and the brightest adult education has to offer, the field also includes teachers who are well meaning but lack the skills necessary to teach challenging classes to language minority adults. While some of these practitioners are volunteers in tutoring programs or work in churches or other community programs, many others are teachers in adult schools who have teaching credentials; and still others may have master's degrees in applied linguistics and teach in community colleges. No matter where they teach, too little effort is made to evaluate teachers and upgrade the skills of those ESL teachers who are less than adequate.

Because programs cannot require part-time teachers to attend uncompensated staff development sessions, there is little opportunity for training for those who need it the most. In addition, adult ESL programs do not have the resources required to turn an inexperienced teacher into a professional ESL educator, either through mentoring or staff development.[22] The most they can offer are a few stipends so that teachers can attend local conferences or participate in regional workshops. Since most of the content in these sessions is focused on the immediate needs of teachers, those who attend simply receive a grab bag of skills and techniques that makes their classes more lively. Seldom do ESL teachers receive the opportunity to develop and hone their skills through participation in ongoing staff development that targets the particular teaching problems that they face.[23]

In the end, everyone is short changed: the individual teachers who feel at a loss, the program that has to deal with uneven competence among its staff, and most importantly, the learners who know that whether they will have one of the better teachers will depend largely on the luck of the draw.

The Credentialing Dilemma

The problems of upgrading teacher skills has led to a vigorous debate in the adult ESL field about the issue of credentialing. Should programs require that ESL teachers must have some special type certification? This issue has split the ESL field. Two major positions have emerged. One group maintains that adult ESL teachers will not be treated like professionals unless the field establishes strong prerequisites for teaching in the form of certificates, degrees, and other academic credentials. The other holds that academic degrees do not guarantee that an instructor can successfully teach second language learners, and that the opposite may be true. Such degrees may keep teachers from exploring better ways to help non-traditional students learn English in non-traditional ways.[24] In fact, many community programs are reluctant to hire teachers with MA degrees in Applied Linguistics to work with beginning students because both the personal and professional experiences of these teachers is often too far removed from that of the learners.

There are also concerns that inflexible credentialing requirements will exclude talented teachers who come from the community of the learners. Many educators argue that denying access to practitioners who themselves are language minority adults could deprive non-traditional students of the role models that might help them succeed.[25]

At present, there is no consensus in the ESL field on the issue of credentialing.

Conclusion

It is difficult to imagine how ESL teachers can gain the respect (and the competitive salaries) they deserve, unless both professionalization and employment issues are considered in ways that are inclusive rather than exclusive. While the chicken-and-egg issue of whether professionalization or opportunities for full time work should come first cannot immediately be resolved, experience in other fields has shown that self-regulation and the willingness to be held accountable to standards has been the key to professionalization.

As adult education standards are being defined by each state, the ESL field has a unique opportunity: to define quality standards in teaching ESL and to demand better employment opportunities. The call for full-time positions also can be strengthened if ESL teachers support the idea that full-time and contract staff should be involved in the continuous improvement of program structures, processes, and outcomes.

MATCHING LEARNER GOALS AND CURRICULUM FOCUS

As pointed out in the preceding chapter, the linear model of ESL, based on a "one size fits all" approach, does not meet the needs of all students equally well. Although life skills and ESL enrichment programs provide students with a sound foundation in language and literacy learning, the generic curriculum often disappoints those who need more focused language services. In particular, the generic ESL curriculum fails to deliver for literacy students, students who work and those who want access to job training.

Making Room for Literacy Students. In spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the standard ESL curriculum assumes that most of the students who come to ESL classes know how to read and write in their mother tongue. As a result, literacy students (students who have only a few years of schooling and have not had the opportunity to develop even basic literacy skills) are often ignored by the system. Because many programs use pencil and paper tests to place students, literacy students may end up in beginning classes even though they may have acquired some conversational English on their own. These students are then doubly penalized: the oral English that is taught in class is well below their level, while the writing component of the class is far too challenging.[26] In the end, literacy students who are often highly motivated, have good coping skills, and could contribute greatly to a class either languish while the rest of the class advances or quit when further attendance seems pointless.

The failure of the system to serve these literacy students is particularly tragic, because adult ESL classes constitute the first chance at formal education for many of them. Some are lucky and find another chance in a class that can meet their needs. The rest are effectively excluded from any kind of further education until their English becomes good enough so they can attend a literacy class with native speakers.

Responding to the Needs of Working Students. Although most ESL students either work or are preparing for work, their needs are only rarely met in ESL programs. In most areas, neither the life skills curriculum offered in beginning classes, nor the ESL enrichment curriculum offered at mid-levels is designed to address the literacy and communication demands that working students face.[27] At best, the usual ESL curricula offers one or two units on employment, but these tend to focus on employment preparation skills, such as looking for a job through the want ads, filling out an employment application, or participating in an interview. Only rarely do these curricula encourage teachers to examine the actual contexts in which students have to, or want to, use English at work. As a result, students are not likely to learn the survival skills that matter most to workers, such as knowing what to say when coming to work on time is impossible, defending themselves against unfair criticism or racist remarks, or complaining when their pay doesn't match their hours worked.

Ideally these students would be served at the work site, but this option is not available to most. In the end, while most ESL classes provide learners with the opportunity to increase their general language skills, they fail to provide students with the skills they need to negotiate the communication demands of daily life and work.

Preparing Students for Skills Training. ESL students who are enrolled in programs that promise skills training (such as JTPA, JOBS and refugee programs) are often referred to general ESL classes before they are admitted to training classes. Although some of these ESL classes include pre-employment as part of their curricula, the content tends to focus largely on general job-related skills, rather than on the pre-academic/pre-vocational skills needed for occupational training. While these types of classes may help learners increase their general knowledge about the job market and result in increases in basic skills, they seldom move them closer to their real goal: English that facilitates successful participation in specific areas of skills training. Although there are a number of models that successfully integrate language and skills training, most ESL students do not have access to them.[28]

THE PROMISE OF TECHNOLOGY

The power of instructional technology to support certain aspects of adult education has long been recognized.[29] Yet, in spite of initial enthusiasm on the part of language teachers and significant investments in hardware and software, the potential of technology in adult ESL has yet to be achieved.[30] Three major problems face adult ESL programs that wish to gain more benefits from instructional technology: inadequate resources to purchase and maintain quality equipment, train teachers, and review materials; lack of expertise on the part of program staff that would allow them to make informed decisions about technology purchases; and lack of leadership at the state and national levels in guiding the appropriate and effective use of technology in adult ESL programs.

The Need to Focus Technology Assistance. The diversity of ESL programs and the complexity of available technologies make it necessary to focus technology support in certain areas. In particular, programs need guidance on effective ways of using technology to facilitate program management, make sound decisions about purchasing and maintaining equipment, and train teachers in making better use of available resources.

Guidance is needed on how to set up databases that collect data that facilitate program management, accountability and planning. An ESL database, for example, can track the proficiency levels and progress of students, report on pertinent background factors and document short and long term goals. While a great many ESL programs are setting up their own databases, most have a great deal of difficulty on deciding what categories should be included and which factors should interact. While statewide efforts to develop a common database for all adult education programs are being considered,[31] local programs could benefit from being involved in partnerships with other programs that have a similar focus. Whatever costs are involved in providing expert technical assistance to these programs might well be offset by the savings in time, money and resources that individual programs now spend on efforts to construct databases that are only partially successful.

Programs also need advice on working with computer consultants. Because the scope of work for programming keeps expanding, project funds often run out before the computer program is completed. State Literacy Resource Centers and other information networks should provide a service that makes recommendations on hiring programmers and discusses what a program might reasonably expect from an expert.

Helping Programs Avoid Costly Mistakes. ESL programs also need help in choosing the kind of hardware that is compatible with the ESL software they would like to employ. And they need guidance in selecting a staff person who can keep up with the mechanical and electronic aspects of the new technology and is willing to train others, including interested students.

Again, State Literacy Resource Centers and clearinghouses can provide advice on these matters. They can also provide assistance in helping programs decide which of the available software and video materials on the market best match the learners they serve and the type of instruction they emphasize. While there are a fair number of general surveys of instructional technology on the market,[32] and reviews of software are available, the information contained in these reports cannot easily be used for decision making by those who are new to technology. Most ESL programs need expert guidance on specific topics and would welcome straightforward advice on how to proceed.

Inadequate resources, lack of experience and expertise and lack of access to technical assistance threaten to isolate programs and prevent ESL learners from having access to the kind of technologies that are already part of many homes and workplaces. To prevent this, the field must find ways to assist ESL practitioners in the use of technology, so that the ESL field can effectively harness its power.

CONCLUSION

This cascade of problems is only a sampling of the difficulties that ESL programs and professionals face. But the picture is not entirely bleak. The adult ESL field is very large and contains a great diversity of programs. It also contains a great many ingenious people who are well aware of the problems just discussed, as well as a great many other problems. As a result, there are innovative efforts to solve virtually all of these problems, and some of the efforts have met with an encouraging degree of success. Moreover, there is no shortage of ideas about how to launch new efforts to improve ESL service.

A few examples illustrate this point: Specially funded transition programs have resulted in curricula and program structures that connect various service providers; a few state Departments of Education are starting to encourage portfolios and other authentic assessment; leadership institutions like TESOL have set up task forces to address employment issues in the field; and more extensive needs assessments are resulting in special focus classes that challenge the linear curriculum.

Unfortunately, most of the promising innovations are limited to a small number of programs. Often they have been supported by short-term demonstration grants. While the benefits of these innovations may persist in the programs that developed them, they are too seldom disseminated to the ESL field as a whole. As a result, there are sparks of excellence in addressing the problems of adult ESL programs, but they are seldom fanned into prairie fires.[33]

For every problem mentioned above, some program somewhere has the solution, or at least part of it. But looking across the ESL field as a whole, problems of transition, testing, teaching standards, meeting learner needs and effectively using technology still seriously impair the effectiveness of the vast majority of programs. This is tragic, because each problem, and each of its ramifications, has direct consequences for the ability of the nation's adult ESL system to meet the needs of limited English adults.

Not only must these problems be solved, but they must be solved for the adult ESL system as a whole. Only then can the 12-14 million limited English adults receive the service that they, and the nation, need and deserve.

Chapter Seven

The Politics of ESL

Why has ESL service for adults in the United States been so severely neglected? When the demand for ESL instruction is so great, why is the supply inadequate and the service system so tangled? Why are a host of major problems unresolved? Why has no one done anything about these problems? Why are they rarely even mentioned, except among ESL practitioners? It would be foolish to argue that providing adequate ESL service should be one of the five or ten highest priorities for the United States. But surely it should be a national a priority at some level. Why is it treated as if it were not a priority at all?

The simple answer is that ESL service in the United States has no strong and reliable advocates: no base of support. Ultimately, this is because the structure and perception of ESL are such that advocacy on its behalf is extremely difficult to generate. From a political perspective, it has all of the hallmarks of a losing issue. This does not mean that the cause of ESL is hopeless. But it does mean that its political liabilities must be recognized, and measures to remedy them must be taken, if the 12-14 million limited English adults in the United States are to receive the service they need.

There are at least five major reasons why ESL is not a national priority, and why it is so difficult to build support for its cause: 1) weak constituencies; 2) the alliance of adult ESL with ABE; 3) the national bias against immigrants; 4) the intergovernmental structure of ESL funding and administration; and 5) the lack of adequate leadership in the ESL field.

WEAK CONSTITUENCIES

It is an American political cliche that "programs for poor people are poor programs." Constituencies that lack the resources to advocate their own cause (such as welfare recipients, public housing tenants and the frail elderly) generally receive second-rate public services of every sort. This is particularly true when they are a small minority of the general population and widely dispersed across the country. In these circumstances, it is hard for them to organize to advance their cause and easy for politicians and bureaucrats to defer dealing with their problems almost indefinitely. "The squeaky wheel gets the grease," is another political cliche, and it is very hard for groups that are relatively small, poor and dispersed to make enough noise to rise above the din of voices competing for public attention.

The beneficiaries of ESL service have all the classic characteristics of weak constituencies, and they have some special characteristics that make them among the weakest of the weak. Most limited English proficient adults are low income people, and many are very poor. At most they make up 6 percent of the adult population, and although they are concentrated in six states, those states are very large. On top of these liabilities, a large portion of ESL beneficiaries are not citizens, and hence they are not voters. Moreover, a significant portion of them are fairly recent arrivals in the United States, who do not fully understand our political process or how to make use of it. Their lack of language ability makes it difficult for them to learn about public affairs and make their views known, although foreign language newspapers, television and radio, as well as bilingual community members, do provide information about current events to many immigrants, and in some areas bilingual ballots are available for those who are eligible to vote.

Whether or not immigrants are well informed, however, at least some are probably reluctant to raise their voices on behalf of ESL or other causes because they are recent arrivals from countries where demanding better service, or any form of political action and advocacy, is usually ineffective and often dangerous. Finally, the fact that most limited English adults must not only work for a living, like most other adults, but also deal with the endless complications of simply surviving in a new nation means that they have little spare time for political activity, or anything else.

In all of these respects, they are a very silent minority. And because many limited English adults are not citizens and cannot vote, they are a minority which politicians and bureaucrats can safely ignore.

In addition, it would be preposterous to think that improving ESL service is one of the major concerns of most limited English proficient adults. Apparently many beneficiaries of this service value it very highly, but they do not spend most of their lives being ESL students, and they do not even spend most of their time studying English when they are. Like most people, they spend most of their time dealing with a host of everyday problems. Issues such as housing, jobs, crime, schools, and other public services are likely to be high on their list of concerns. The fact that ESL service is an intermittent activity is to its political detriment, even among its beneficiaries.

But what about those who might speak for them? The only people for whom ESL service is a more or less continuous activity are the teachers. But the vast majority of them are part-time employees: either moonlighting elementary and secondary school teachers or ESL "commuters" who shuttle between part-time positions in several different programs, without any certainty of how long they will be in the ESL field. The moonlighters cannot be expected to see ESL as their primary loyalty or to become active in its cause. The commuters lack the status to influence the institutions for which they work, and because of their peripatetic existence, they are hard to organize.

There are, of course, full-time, tenured ESL teachers, mostly teaching for-credit courses. Most of them, however, are fairly contented with their situations, whether they should be or not. And, within the ESL field, there is a class rivalry between full-time and part-time staff that further inhibits the formation of a teacher bloc that might advocate for change. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that improving adult ESL service in the United States has never been a high priority for even the professional organization that represents ESL teachers, TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages).

ESL administrators and scholars are another possible source of support for the field, and the few voices that are raised on its behalf usually come from these sources. But the number of senior level administrators and scholars who spend anything like full time on ESL issues is very small. Most senior administrators share responsibility for ESL with responsibility for ABE, GED and other adult education services, and they too rarely use their influence on behalf of ESL. The people who spend full time on ESL at the state and federal level are almost always in the middle or lower ranks of the bureaucracy where their functions are mainly technical, and their opportunities for influence are few. At the program level, most ESL programs have full-time administrators, but they are usually overwhelmed by day-to-day operational problems.

The distractions of other commitments is equally serious for ESL scholars. There are very few academic positions that allow scholars to concentrate full time on adult ESL. Usually scholars combine a part-time involvement in this field with a primary commitment to the broader issues of linguistics or some other discipline.

Finally, what about the immigration and ethic minority lobbying groups? Hispanics, at least, have fairly strong advocates in organizations such as NCLR (the National Council of La Raza), MALDEF (the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund) and NALEO (the National Association of Latino Elected Officials). But these organizations have never put adult ESL high on their priority list. The reason, apparently, is that limited English adults are a small and relatively weak part of even their constituencies. These groups try to represent all Hispanics in the United States, and most Hispanics are citizens and voters who are perfectly proficient in English.

Moreover, in advocating the cause of their constituents, the Hispanic organizations, like other ethnic advocacy groups, understandably select the issues that most of those constituents, including limited English speakers, have in common: the issues of jobs, housing and other social services just mentioned. As a result, ESL has almost as hard a time gaining priority in most ethnic advocacy groups as it does in the general political arena, for many of the same reasons, although the potential for it to rise on the agenda of these groups is, of course, greater.

For example, these groups have addressed the issue of limited English proficiency, but their activities in this field have been directed primarily toward efforts to prevent discrimination against adults and children who are not fully proficient in English. Moreover, they were instrumental in launching the Amnesty process and played an active role in its implementation. From these endeavors, it would seem to be a short step to promoting interest and action to improve adult ESL. To take another example, in 1993, the National Immigration Forum attempted to launch an ESL initiative, but had to defer its effort due to lack of funding and the need to deal with an avalanche of problems created by suddenly heightened concerns about immigration issues.[1] In short, the potential to enlist ethnic and immigrant advocacy groups in the ESL effort is very real, but that potential has not yet been fully realized.

At present, then, a major impediment to improving ESL service is that its immediate beneficiaries form an exceptionally weak constituency, and those who might speak for them are attending to other issues.

THE ADULT EDUCATION BIND

But, obviously, there is some support for ESL. Various people at various times have realized both the humanitarian and practical reasons for providing this service. The proof of this is that we have any ESL programs at all. Even without strong constituencies, ESL has been written into various pieces of federal and state legislation.

But if various levels of government have decided that it is important to provide at least some ESL service, why haven't they decided that it is important to provide it well? Aside from the absence of strong constituencies, the structure of ESL service itself, provides part of the answer.

As mentioned above, ESL is almost always a guest in someone else's house. Usually, it is joined at the hip, financially, politically, legally and managerially, with ABE and GED services. While it has some commonalities with these other services, its differences in terms of clientele and service are at least as great. Nevertheless, its place in the pattern of service delivery perpetuates the image that ESL is just ABE with an accent.

Worse than the image is the destructive competition that exists for adult education resources. Most of this competition takes place among higher level managers at the state and local level. Policymakers generally skirt the issue by voting funds for "adult education" that may be used for both native speakers and limited English adults. At the managerial level, the issue is whether to serve the ESL population, which is creating the greater demand, or the ABE population, which is more numerous. There are no winners in a contest like this, and the percentage splits of funds that usually result are more an expediency than a reasoned response to the problem.

But regardless of the division of funding, ESL has been relegated to second-class status within the adult education world. This is because in most adult education programs in most states, ESL students are in the minority. Moreover, even in those states and areas where this is not true, the present high levels of demand for ESL are a fairly recent phenomenon. It has developed gradually over a number of years, and only recently has the accumulated demand reached such high levels that it cannot be ignored. In addition, it has only been fairly recently that the adult education field has received a number of shocks that have raised awareness of the need for ESL. Among the shocks have been the high levels of service required by the Amnesty program, the large numbers of limited English adults reported by the 1990 Census and the low levels at which immigrants scored on the 1991 National Adult Literacy Survey.

This combination of a fairly gradual increase in demand together with recent shocks to awareness, has caught many adult educators unprepared. They simply have not had time to adjust their thinking, plans, policies, operations and programs to the fact that ESL is at least as large a part of their service as is ABE.

The fact that the ESL problem has only recently been perceived as acute in some places, combined with the fact that it is not acute in most places, means that most of the adult education field is organized primarily around ABE and GED. Most of the adult education administrators at the federal level, and at the state and local level even in high demand areas, have backgrounds in ABE/GED, not ESL. And in a great many respects, ESL is forced to fit an ABE mold. For example, many of the tests used to screen ESL students are reading tests designed for native English speakers, and in most states no distinction is made between the qualifications that teachers must have to teach ESL, as opposed to ABE or GED. To take another example, in the recent development of "performance standards" for adult education programs, most states have applied the same process and outcome standards to both ESL and ABE/GED. According to some reports, ESL was not even discussed as a separate entity in some state deliberations about performance standards.[2]

This systematic neglect of ESL is probably most vivid at the federal level. Not only are ABE, GED and ESL linked together in formula funding under the Adult Education Act, but the formula used to distribute those funds is tilted toward ABE/GED. States receive funds based on the percentage of their population 16 years of age or older that has not completed high school. While this is arguably a relevant criterion for distributing ABE and GED funds, it fails to take account of the fact that many limited English proficient adults have completed school (either in their native countries or in the United States) but still are not able to speak, understand, read or write English very well.

In fact, if federal funds were distributed on the basis of the limited English population of states, far more funding would go to the six most heavily impacted states.

To mention one final example, the United States Department of Education recently invested $14 million in a comprehensive National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). But that survey was designed almost entirely to meet ABE/GED needs. It measured only English language reading ability. That is, it only measured one of the four core ESL skills. It did not measure the ability to write, speak and understand English. Moreover, many of its questions presupposed an acquaintance with American culture that even some immigrants who are moderately proficient in English may lack.[3] In short, the survey may be useful to ABE/GED providers, but it was not designed to determine how many people need ESL service or what their skill levels are in any domain other than reading English. Nor was it designed to gather a great deal of other information, such as information about levels of native-language literacy or understanding of American culture, that would be of use to ESL providers in understanding the dimensions of need and improving their services.

If ESL suffers from low status within adult education, it suffers from even lower status within the various other areas of education on which it impinges. Many JOBS administrators and JTPA officials who encounter limited English adults consider their language and literacy problems to be a troublesome complication in delivering services that are already difficult enough to provide. As a result they either screen out limited English adults or refer them to adult educators, who rarely appreciate the needs of these other programs. ESL students become a hot potato on which no one gets a very firm grip, because no one is in the business of serving the multiple needs of limited English adults. Even for-credit ESL programs suffer from a version of this problem. They are seen as auxiliary services within community colleges and other institutions, rather than part of mainstream education. As a result, the for-credit teachers are often frustrated when other faculty complain that ESL students cannot live up to their expectations, and the other faculty are often frustrated because they believe for-credit teachers fail to understand what those expectations are.

But perhaps even more fatal to ESL than its neglect by the adult education field is the fact that it is considered part of that field at all. Adult education is regarded as a second-rate activity by most educators, policymakers, administrators and virtually everyone else who has anything to do with it. The national enthusiasm for "literacy" in the late 1980s and early 1990s was always more rhetoric than reality. Much was said, but there was very little net improvement in adult education during that period. In any event, the literacy bubble has burst, leaving very little trace behind.

The cold hard fact is that most Americans, and certainly most policymakers, believe that the overwhelming priorities in education are improving elementary, secondary and higher education: the education track for children. And all levels of government, as well as the public, are very much exercised in trying to do just that.

Adult education is an add-on of dubious significance that is on practically no one's priority list.

This is true despite the fact that a great many federal and state officials are quick to argue that America must upgrade the skills of its workforce and that most of that workforce for the foreseeable future will be today's adults. Incongruously, almost all of the solutions that the same policymakers propose for this problem entail improving the education of today's children, rather than today's adults.

As long as ESL is joined to adult education it will be doubly disadvantaged: both by neglect from the adult education field and by neglect of that field in the policymaking world. ESL would stand a better chance of making its case if it stood alone. It would gain more adherents if it was presented as an employment issue, a family issue and a citizenship issue, rather than an adult education issue.

THE IMMIGRANT BIAS

Even more damaging to ESL than its association with adult education is the fact that many of its beneficiaries are immigrants. The former is a condition that could be changed; the latter is not. Bias against investing in services for immigrants is surely one of the major political liabilities with which ESL must contend.

From the earliest days of our republic, Americans have always had mixed feelings about immigrants. In the famous Jefferson-Hamilton debates, Jefferson was a restrictionist, fearing the influence of alien cultures and political ideas on the United States. Hamilton favored immigration, on the theory that the United States would benefit from the skills and industry that immigrants bring with them. But the debate was not about language. And, in any event, Hamiltonian ideas prevailed. Neither the idea of restricting immigration, nor the idea of designating English as the national language were even discussed during the Constitutional Convention.[4] According to constitutional scholar Arnold Leibowitz, "This is somewhat unusual since the designation of an official language is quite common in constitutional documents...".[5]

In fact, during the 18th and early 19th centuries, the United States and most European countries had remarkably cosmopolitan attitudes toward immigration, language and citizenship. Borders were fairly permeable, and citizenship was usually a matter of residence. Most countries took for granted the fact that they contained regions where the dominant language was not spoken, and elites (as well as a great many other people) were usually multilingual.

It was only in the 19th century, when the franchise was gradually extended in many countries, that citizenship became a hotly contested matter. At about the same time, many western countries experienced the full flowering of romantic nationalism.

Myths of common historical roots and ethnic uniformity were propounded to reinforce national loyalties. Part of this romantic nation building process was a passion for the national language, national literature and national cultural uniformity as a means of distinguishing "them" from "us."

In the United States, waves of xenophobia have come and gone throughout our history. The incidence of animosity toward immigrants seems to be determined with depressing exactitude by a simple formula. Whenever high rates of immigration correspond to economic downturns, anti-immigrant sentiment flourishes. Thus, it reached high tide when large numbers of immigrants entered the United States during the long depression of the 1830s and 1840s set off by Jacksonian economic policies, during the various economic panics of the late 1870s and 1880s, during the recession following World War I, and again today. Interestingly, the long period of relative tolerance toward immigrants from the 1920s until the late 1980s included the Great Depression and other slumps, but during these periods immigration rates were very low due to restrictionist measures passed in the 1920s. And when those measures were lifted in 1965 and 1970, the country was fairly affluent.

By all indications, then, xenophobia is largely an irrational and atavistic response to economic fears directed at a visible scapegoat: the person from "over there." Differences in language and culture make immigrants particularly vulnerable scapegoats, because those differences make them easy to identify.

In today's world, nations doubtless must control their borders, although the day will hopefully come when they no longer feel the need to do so. But reasoned arguments about immigration are a different matter from the blind animus displayed toward foreign-born people who are already here. This is particularly true, because most immigrants have entered the United States in compliance with our laws, and some (refugees) came here at our invitation.

However unseemly xenophobia may be, there can be no doubt that it has recently flared up in the United States.[6] There can also be no doubt that ESL has been one of its casualties. At a time of limited resources, too many Americans would find it hard to accept a case for investing more to educate immigrants. Fear that immigrants will take our jobs and degrade our culture overwhelm both common sense and common interest. Many public officials undoubtedly believe that this is a good time to lay low on proposals to do anything for immigrants. They should think better of the national interest in helping this population and the national values at stake.

In short, to its list of political liabilities (which already includes the problems of weak constituencies and an unfortunate association with adult education) ESL must regrettably add the fact that many of its beneficiaries are, for the time being, unpopular with at least some segments of American society.

FEDERALISM

Most, but not all, funding for adult ESL service is provided through intergovernmental programs: federally initiated programs to which states, and sometimes localities, contribute funds and for which they also develop policies within a federal policy framework. The federal Adult Education Act is the source of intergovernmental funding for ESL most commonly identified, but JOBS, JTPA, vocational education and a host of smaller programs also fall into this category.

In the United States, most human services are supported by intergovernmental programs, with some notable exceptions such as Social Security and Medicare, so the intergovernmental structure of ESL funding and policy are not unusual. But, in their nature, intergovernmental programs have a number of characteristic weaknesses that go a long way to explain many of the shortcomings of human service systems in the United States, including ESL.[7]

The first weakness is divided responsibility. If several levels of government are in charge of a program or service system, the end result is that no one at any level exercises adequate oversight and leadership. There is a tendency to pass the buck. The federal government is reluctant to invest in detailed oversight of how the states implement intergovernmental programs, because overseeing 50 different state efforts is costly and difficult, and because the federal government considers implementation to be a state role. On the other hand, states too often settle for minimal compliance with broad federal requirements as their oversight criteria. In fact, they often argue that they are restricted from doing more by federal regulations and the federal paperwork burden that consumes much of their administrative capacity.

The net result of this federal-state standoff is that, in ESL, as in many other intergovernmental programs, administration, oversight, innovation and concerns for quality of service are seriously deficient. And a great many functions fall between the stools. For example, because it is arguably everybody's business (federal, state and local agencies) to gather data on the number of ESL students, how they are served and what the results of this service are, it ends up being nobody's business. This type of elementary program information aggregated at the national, state or city level is rarely available for any intergovernmental program. And the absence of it makes program evaluation and improvement virtually impossible.

A second characteristic weakness of intergovernmental programs is lack of national uniformity. Each state and locality develops policies for implementing these programs in a different way. In some respects this is a good thing, because it allows programs to be tailored to differing local needs. But the problem with lack of uniformity is that very poor service, as well as very good service, is tolerated. If ESL is a national need, does the limited English population of one state deserve less adequate service than the population of a neighboring state, simply because of differences in the outlooks of state policymakers? To answer this question in the affirmative ignores many of the reasons why there is a national investment in ESL in the first place. It ignores the fact that limited English speakers are part of a common national economy, labor market and civil society in which all parts of the country have an interest.

A third weakness of intergovernmental programs is what political scientists often refer to as "the paradox of federalism." The paradox is that, generally, the areas most in need of a particular social service are those least able to support it. The limited English population, like most groups in need of publicly-funded human services, is concentrated in large cities and impoverished rural areas that are overwhelmed by the need for public services of every sort. In part because of the high concentration of disadvantaged people, these areas typically lack the tax bases needed to support the service levels required.

Intergovernmental programs are supposed to be an answer to this paradox. By these programs the federal government narrows the gap between resources and need by providing federal dollars to areas with heavy concentrations of social problems. And, to some extent this strategy is successful. In the case of ESL, however, the federal government manifestly has not filled the gap. Many of the states with large limited English populations have had to appropriate far more than the federal government provides to meet the need for ESL in impacted localities.

This solution is fine, as far as it goes. And it may seem to be entirely satisfactory, because these states include California, New York, Illinois and, in fact, most of the largest and richest states in the union. The problem is that although these states are large, they are no longer as rich as they once were. Several of them have been teetering on the brink of bankruptcy in recent years. Like the federal government, they are caught between increasing needs for service and tax bases weakened by a sluggish economy. Moreover, state governments, unlike the federal government, must usually balance their budgets each year.

In short, most states have done more than their share to meet the ESL need, and it is unrealistic to expect them to do much more. But the need for ESL service is far from being met. In these circumstances, a strong case can be made for the federal government assuming more of the burden.

In recent years, state officials have been pointing out that immigration policy is set by the federal government, and that it is in large part because of federal decisions about immigration that the limited English population has grown so rapidly. In recognition of these facts, it makes sense for the federal government to provide special appropriations for ESL to those states where federal policies have resulted in an enormous increase in both need and demand. Not only is this equitable, but in light of state fiscal difficulties, it is the only way in which the need for adult ESL service is likely to be met.

Moreover, a stronger federal fiscal role would make it easier to deal with issues of national uniformity and quality of service. Right now, ESL service is largely a state-driven system: the federal government is a minority stakeholder. A larger federal role would provide the rationale and mechanism for stronger federal leadership in this area, and leadership of some sort is clearly required.

After all, practically everyone concedes that elementary and secondary education should be an intergovernmental function in which states play the leading role. Nevertheless, national policymakers are currently going to great lengths to find measures that will compensate for the problems of quality and uniformity that this funding structure creates. A similar effort is clearly required and appropriate for ESL.

LEADERSHIP

After arguing that ESL serves exceptionally weak constituencies, that it has an unfortunate association with other programs, that its beneficiaries are the victims of prejudice and that it is plagued by all the usual problems of intergovernmental programs, arguing that the field is in serious need of leadership may seem redundant or unnecessary.

Nevertheless, the issue of leadership is of the utmost importance. The only way out of any and all of the problems that plague ESL is for someone to speak up for this field. Who is going to do it? With the merits on their side, it often takes only a few knowledgeable and articulate spokesmen to advance a good cause. Effective national leaders are people behind whom the members of weak constituencies can rally, who can highlight issues that are obscured by programmatic confusion and intergovernmental clutter, and who can refute the distortions of prejudice. In fact, the usual way in which weak constituencies are organized is for a few leaders to raise awareness of their cause to the national level.

But there are virtually no leaders of the ESL field as a whole. One of the legacies of all the other problems mentioned above is that there are not more than half a dozen people in the United States who are broadly knowledgeable about ESL, highly visible in the field and adept at the skills of advocating a public cause. And of those few, even fewer are willing to take on the task of leading a crusade for the field as a whole.

As a result, if a policymaker, a journalist, an educational administrator or anyone else wanted to do something to help the ESL field and needed advice about what measures to take, there would today be practically no one they could call.

There are a great many dedicated and highly intelligent people in the ESL field, but almost all of them are knowledgeable only within narrow areas of specialization.

That is, they know a great deal about their program, their function, or their research area. They can even be very able politicians in advancing their ideas and interests within these confines. But virtually none of these very able people know very much about areas of this complex field outside their immediate concerns, and they are understandably reluctant to speculate about broad-gauged problems or to speak for the ESL field as a whole.

Some of the more able ESL professionals aspire to playing a larger role. But consider who these professionals are: they are teachers (often part-time), middle-level administrators, and scholars who only work part-time on ESL. The overwhelming majority of them are trained in education, linguistics, social work and other service or research fields, not in policy analysis and advocacy. As a result, it is not surprising that they lack the skills that advocacy requires: strategic vision, system-wide thinking, political maneuvering, organizing and public relations. When could they possibly find the time and opportunity to gain a broader understanding of the field than their jobs afford them? And when could they possibly find the time to gain and practice the skills of advocating a public cause? In addition, even many of the best people in the ESL field tend to internalize the image that the outside world has of ESL and everyone associated with it. Too often they see themselves as powerless people who cannot make a difference by speaking out.

The leadership vacuum in the ESL field is a problem of the greatest importance that must be addressed in its own right if any of the other problems of the field are to ever to be solved. Those problems will only be solved if people who can credibly speak for the field as a whole demand solutions. That is how our democratic process works.

There is a pressing need to develop a corps of broad-gauged experts in adult ESL, who can exercise leadership and command respect both within and outside the field. Developing that corps is a worthy cause for philanthropies, professional associations and ethnic advocacy groups.

Moreover, there is a pressing need for support of leadership activities. The literacy movement of a few years ago may not have brought many lasting gains, but it at least opened the door for progress by raising the visibility of the literacy problem in America. A public relations campaign for ESL of the sort that raised the flag of literacy would be of immense value. Most Americans do not have the faintest idea of what this enormously complex field really consists of, or why they should care about it. An effective public education effort would legitimize the field and serve as a rallying point for its presently silent friends, both within and outside the world of ESL.

But the need for leadership goes beyond the lack of leadership individuals and activities to the lack of leadership institutions. As mentioned above, virtually none of the existing institutions that might be expected to speak out on behalf of ESL have placed it on their agendas. Certainly it is a hard issue, and certainly there are competing priorities. But the sheer numbers of people in need of service, the chronic neglect of the field, and the fact that English language ability is a threshold requirement for securing decent jobs, public services, citizenship and all the other causes these groups support argue that advocates for ethnic minorities, for immigrants and for a variety of social welfare causes should reconsider their positions. If they do not, those who care about the future of ESL must establish a separate institutional base from which to advance their cause. This only takes a few dedicated people to begin with, and the willingness of ESL professionals to take this step is a challenge to their commitment to the field.

Private organizations and individuals are not the only sources of leadership in our nation, however, and they should not bear the responsibility alone. Traditionally, weak and dispersed constituencies have looked to the federal government to protect their interests. This is because those who are not so numerous in any one place may count as larger numbers from the federal perspective, and because the federal government can accommodate a larger agenda and has larger resources than states and localities. It is also a single point of influence on which weak constituencies can direct their influence. For these and other reasons, the federal government has been the champion of racial minorities, the disabled and other groups when they could not make progress at the state and local level.

The federal government has failed to be an advocate for adult ESL service in recent years. It has buried ESL in a host of other programs and failed to promote its cause in any meaningful way. There is no organizational base for ESL at the federal level that can lobby within the government or serve as a focal point for national concerns. In the past, federal leadership has been important in ESL. Special federal funds for language and literacy training of refugees in the 1970s and early 1980s and for the ESL service in the Amnesty program raised the visibility of ESL, increased the level of service, brought many more people into the field and improved professional practices. In fact, much of the progress of ESL in recent decades can be attributed to sporadic bursts of heightened federal involvement. The field seems to grow in fits and starts as a result of these initiatives.

To meet the national need for adult ESL service, however, more sustained leadership is required. Dedicated and attentive federal officials should not require someone to beat down their doors before they respond to the needs of 12-14 million people, although advocates of ESL would be well advised to beat on their doors all the same.

THE POLITICAL PROSPECT

Friends of the ESL cause must realize that it is poorly positioned to gain public support. But that does not mean that the cause is hopeless. In fact, the battle has not yet begun. Most of the liabilities of ESL are problems that other causes have faced in the past. If experience is any teacher, these liabilities can be overcome. To overcome them, however, the ESL field and those who would befriend it need a strategic plan for action on every level: a strategic plan that will get ESL from where it is now to the priority status it deserves. Such a plan is set forth in the pages that follow.

Chapter Eight

A Strategic Plan for ESL

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

No significant progress in improving the quantity and quality of ESL service for adults in America can occur without the combined efforts of all of the stakeholders in the ESL system: the federal government, states and localities, private funders and, last but not least, professionals within the ESL field itself.

To begin reversing years of neglect, however, the federal role is the most important of all. Although the need for ESL service is heavily concentrated in a limited number of cities and states, the results of failing to meet this need have profound effects on the nation's economy and social well-being.

This makes the problems of ESL national problems, and it is the unique responsibility of the federal government to see that national problems are adequately addressed. Moreover, because of the heavy concentration of need in certain areas, ESL is a service that suffers from "the paradox of federalism:" the greatest needs occur where the resources are least adequate. Helping to overcome this type of problem by national assistance is a traditional role of the federal government, and one that only it can play.

In the case of adult ESL, states and localities have a particularly strong case for more federal assistance, because federal immigration policies are in large part responsible for the increase in demand for service, and because other levels of government have already made substantial efforts that have stretched their resources to the limit. Finally, many of the problems of ESL arise from the lack of nationwide leadership and responsibility for the advancement and improvement of service. Somewhere there must be a focal point of effort and expertise for solving the innumerable problems that plague ESL in almost every state and locality. The federal government is the only instrumentality that provides nationwide leadership in human services of any sort and develops solutions to problems that affect the United States as a whole.

The federal government must play a larger and more effective role in the ESL field. This must be the first priority in any strategic plan for ESL. But it cannot be the only priority. Concurrent with the development of a new federal role must be the development of new roles for other levels of government, private organizations and the

ESL field itself. In fact, federal activism is likely to occur only if these other stakeholders in ESL demand it, and only if they are prepared to shoulder their share of responsibility for creating a better service system.

NATIONAL GOALS

The overall goal of all these partners in the ESL enterprise, and of any strategy to address the national problem of providing adequate service, must be **to ensure that the nation provides a supply of high quality ESL instruction that at least meets the demand for present service offerings and that expands certain high priority areas of service as soon as possible. Among these high priority areas are: job training, workplace education, higher education, citizenship education and family literacy.**

Obviously, the ESL problem in America will not be solved until the need for service is fully met. But competing national priorities will probably stand in the way of the investment required to fully meet that need for some time, and reasonable people can differ over exactly what meeting the need would entail. How proficient in English must people become before we declare that we have met the national need for ESL, and who should decide?

In contrast, meeting the national demand for ESL service is a reasonably well defined and achievable goal. Existing services clearly meet at least some of the needs of limited English proficient adults, because large numbers of those adults are clamoring for admission to ESL classes. And the resources required to meet this demand are fairly modest compared to other national expenditures on education and social services.

Although there are no reliable nationwide statistics on how large the unmet demand is, interviews with program managers, together with estimates of current spending levels, at least indicate what the dimensions of a realistic initial effort to meet demand should be. Program managers indicate that very little of the unmet demand is in for-credit ESL courses. This is because those courses have a fairly stable base of support from a number of state and federal sources. Most of the unmet demand is for the variety of programs supported by adult education funds, programs offered by CBOs and the other miscellaneous sources of ESL service. Program managers in these sectors of the ESL field offer a wide range of estimates of how many would-be students they cannot serve, or cannot offer more than token service. A common estimate is that they would have to double their levels of service to meet demand, but a few very popular programs report that demand is much greater, and many others report that it is less.

Present national spending in the ESL field, excluding for-credit courses, is at most on the order of $400 million per year. Doubling the size of any service system is a very ambitious undertaking, as many ESL programs discovered when they had to double or triple their enrollments during the Amnesty period. As a result, an initial effort to meet the demand for ESL service probably should not be larger than the $400 million that would be required to double the size of those sectors of the field that cannot keep up with requests for service.

But an initial national effort to meet demand for ESL probably should be of about that size. This is because it is the largest feasible effort, and because doubling the level of service would, according to the estimates of almost all ESL providers, go a long way toward meeting demand. If this amount of additional funding proved to be too large, the excess could be used to make much-needed improvements in program quality. If it proved too small, it would be at least a significant step in the right direction and could be augmented later.

Taking account of all these considerations, it is reasonable to estimate that an initial effort to meet the demand for ESL service should be funded at the rate of about $400 million per year. Clearly this is not an outrageously large amount. Funds on this order were made available to meet the educational needs of Amnesty applicants.

The moral imperative to at least make the largest feasible effort to meet the demand for adult ESL services is overwhelming. It is disgraceful that immigrants and other limited English proficient adults are turned away from programs that provide services essential to their well-being and that provide them with the minimal tools required to pursue the economic and social opportunities of American life. It is in the interests of the limited English adults, their children and of the nation as a whole to ensure that no one will be turned away and that all will be adequately served, particularly when the cost of an effort that would at least approach this goal is within our reach.

But in addition to meeting the demand for existing ESL services, it is in our interest to make available certain types of services to limited English adults that are presently in limited supply and for which there may be a large latent demand. ESL services for citizenship rank high on this list. Beginning in 1993, the first of the three million people who participated in the Amnesty program became eligible for citizenship. In the coming years, their numbers will increase. Many will require additional ESL instruction to help them meet the requirements of the naturalization process. Even more will require service to help them gain the language and literacy skills needed to fully exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In addition to the Amnesty population, a significant number of other limited English immigrants also are eligible for citizenship. It is unseemly that this country should contain a large disenfranchised population blocked from exercising citizenship rights by language problems that can be solved. American citizenship is a precious commodity. Having offered eligibility to the Amnesty population and others, we should remove barriers to their taking advantage of the offer.

Job training, workplace education, academic preparation and family literacy are other high priority areas of service. It is in the interest of all of us for limited English adults to attain better vocational and academic skills. Particularly in the geographic areas where they are concentrated, we badly need their human capital. And it is in the interests of all of us to help with the academic advancement of young people who are first and second generation Americans by helping their parents to attain the communications skills and background information necessary to participate in their schooling.

In pursuing all these goals, considerations of need and demand converge. No adult can be forced to participate in any form of adult education. By expanding the availability of specialized services, we will both change and expand the nature of demand for ESL. As a result, the nation's overall goal for ESL must be to meet the demand both for the present array of services and for an expanded menu of high priority offerings.

SPECIFIC GOALS

To achieve this overall goal, all the partners in the ESL service system must join forces to achieve five more specific goals.

1. To separate the administration and financing of adult ESL from other educational and social services. Many, if not most, of the problems of ESL service arise from the fact that it is hopelessly intertwined with numerous other service systems. This renders it almost invisible to policymakers, administrators and the public and leads to neglect of needs for funding, oversight, staffing and program improvement. As a first priority, ESL service needs its own financial and managerial base, and the ESL field needs a base from which to advocate its cause.

2. To provide adequate and equitable funding. Because the demand for adult ESL service greatly exceeds the supply in many parts of the country, funding must be judged to be inadequate. And because most of the funds available for ESL are derived from programs, such as adult education, that distribute their resources on the basis of formulas that are not intended to meet the need for ESL, funding must be deemed to be inequitable. Support for adult ESL must be expanded and targeted to geographic areas where the need and demand for service are most pressing.

3. To change the focus of adult ESL service so that the services offered more closely meet the needs of the limited English population. This means, at least, moving away from a primary focus on the linear model of teaching general language and literacy ability to a greater emphasis on a linked set of services that provide ESL instruction for special needs, such as employment, academics, family relations and citizenship. This would lead to more tangible real-world benefits for ESL students, possibly increase retention in programs and elevate the status of ESL from an adjunct field of other types of education to a distinctive family of services that has standing in its own right.

4. To improve the state of professional practice in adult ESL. This entails, among other things, demanding more systematic planning and closer linkages among programs, creating stronger and more appropriate standards of accountability for results, easing transition among programs and providers, improving the skills and working conditions of staff, and developing better tools of the trade such as materials, assessment procedures and teaching approaches.

5. To create a professional infrastructure that will give a voice to adult ESL providers and students. At present everyone involved in ESL is a member of a very silent minority. Unless both professionals and the beneficiaries of ESL service begin to speak up on its behalf, it will remain a neglected backwater of the American educational system. There must be concerted efforts to develop a leadership cadre within the field and organizations that can both advocate its cause and improve its quality.

Achieving these five goals would expand and strengthen the infrastructure of the nation's ESL system to meet present demands and high-priority needs. It would also overcome many of the political liabilities of ESL by giving it a distinct identity as a service that meets clearly important national needs beyond language and literacy education for its own sake. Achieving these goals would also overcome political liabilities by organizing the constituency for ESL and filling the financial gaps that the present intergovernmental programs have created.

The measures that must be taken by all the actors concerned with ESL to achieve these goals are too numerous to recount here. But there are certain measures that must be accorded highest priority, because they represent the preconditions for any progress in the ESL field at all. These are summarized in the tables on pages 90 and 91. For convenience, they will be discussed in terms of what each of the actors in the ESL field must do to ensure that the United States provides the ESL service that limited English adults and the nation as a whole require.

Table I

A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ADULT ESL

General Goal:

To ensure that the United States provides a supply of high quality adult ESL instruction that at least meets the demand of limited English proficient adults for present service offerings and that expands certain high priority areas of service, as soon as possible. Among these high priority areas are: job training, workplace education, citizenship education and family literacy.

Specific Goals:

- *To separate the administration and financing of adult ESL from ABE, GED and other educational and social services.*
- *To provide adequate and equitable funding for adult ESL;*
- *To change the focus of adult ESL service, so that the types of services offered more closely meet the needs of the limited English population;*
- *To improve the state of professional practice in adult ESL;*
- *To create a professional infrastructure that will give a voice to adult ESL professionals and students to advocate the cause of adult ESL.*

Table II

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ADULT ESL

Specific Measures

The Federal Role:

__The President Should__:

- *Launch a Presidential initiative for Adult ESL and appoint an interdepartmental working group under the Secretary of Education to coordinate federal ESL efforts and lead the initiative. Elements of the Initiative should be the following federal administrative and legislative measures.*

__The Department of Education Should At Once__:

- *Initiate a comprehensive national assessment of the need and demand for ESL including a thorough profile of limited English proficient adults in the United States;*

- *Initiate a comprehensive survey of the ESL service system in the United States, including the services offered, numbers of students served, methods of instruction, finances and management;*

- *Support the development and dissemination by groups representative of the ESL field of model teacher certification standards and program performance standards for adult ESL;*

- *Support a program of research on adult ESL aimed at improving practice, and create a new Center on Language for Adult ESL in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.*

__The Departments of Education, Labor and HHS Should At Once__:

- *Issue regulations that ensure that limited English adults will be served by Even Start, JTPA, JOBS, vocational education and other federally funded programs at least in proportion to their representation in the population eligible for service.*

__The Executive Should Propose, and Congress Should Enact, Changes In The Adult Education Act That Would__:

- *Separate the administration of ESL from the administration of ABE and GED by creating a new Director of ESL in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education who would have responsibility for administering all DOE funding for adult ESL and coordinating federal and national programs that provide adult ESL service;*

- ***Separate the funding of ESL in the Act's state grant program from the funding of ABE and GED and create a separate appropriation for ESL that is the same percentage of total state grant funding as states spent on ESL in the year of enactment (about 40 percent);***

- ***Appropriate $200-$300 million in special impact aid funds to support ESL in those states that contain the largest concentration of limited English adults and that make the largest effort to serve them;***

- ***Re-authorize the $800 million remaining from the Amnesty process to be used over 5 years in grants to states to help Amnesty participants and other immigrants apply for citizenship, and require that states must provide participants in this process with up to 100 hours of ESL service;***

- ***Require that half of all federal funds for adult ESL received by states from the state grant program and the impact aid program must be used for programs of job training, workplace education, family literacy, preparation for higher education and preparation for citizenship that integrate ESL instruction with other forms of instruction;***

- ***Redirect the National Workplace Literacy Program to emphasize building the capacity of workplace literacy providers, rather than service delivery;***

- ***Change the provision in the National Literacy Act requiring "direct and equitable access" by CBOs to federal Adult Education Act funds to a 5 percent set-aside of those funds for CBOs;***

- ***Create a 15 percent set-aside of all Adult Education Act funds that support ESL for a program of technical assistance to states and ESL providers administered by the new Director of ESL, and increase the funding cycles for demonstration grant programs from one to three years.***

In Other Legislation the Executive Should Propose and Congress Should Enact Measures That Would:

- ***Provide funding and create requirements that ensure that all education and training services, including ESL, provided under the JOBS program will be supported by federal or state JOBS appropriations;***

- ***Require the Office of Refugee Resettlement to extend the period of eligibility for ESL services for refugees to two years and appropriate specific sums for refugee education.***

The State Role:

States Should:

- ***Like the federal government, separate the administration and financing of adult ESL from other educational services, diversify service offerings, develop reliable data on administration and funding of adult ESL, adopt standards for ESL teacher certification and program evaluation, and initiate more extensive teacher training and technical assistance in the ESL field;***

- *Increase the effectiveness of for-credit and non-credit ESL provided by community colleges in preparing students for academic studies, and investigate allegations of abuse in for-credit programs;*
- *Improve transition throughout the adult ESL system, using community needs assessments to plan more efficient service and transition systems in particular localities;*
- *Devote more of their ESL resources to integrated vocational ESL (VESL) and workplace education for limited English speakers;*
- *Increase the percentage of full-time ESL teachers to 60 percent as soon as possible and provide benefit pools for part-time teachers;*
- *Require that all programs meet minimal quality standards and reduce the number of students served if necessary to accomplish this;*
- *Demand more help from the federal government in supporting adult ESL service.*

The Role of the Adult ESL Field:

__ESL Practitioners and Scholars Should__:

- *Develop a national professional association to improve standards of practice and advocate the cause of adult ESL in the United States;*
- *Develop a leadership cadre of ESL advocates;*
- *Form a coalition for ESL with groups representing ethnic minorities, immigrants and human service causes to promote the federal initiative for ESL.*

The Role of Private Philanthropy and Other Groups with Interests Related to Adult ESL:

- *Private foundations should provide support for the development of a national professional association for ESL and leadership development of ESL professionals;*
- *Private foundations should support the development of innovative research and practice in adult ESL;*
- *Groups representing ethnic minorities, immigrants and human service causes should join with the ESL field in a coalition to advocate the federal initiative for ESL.*

THE FEDERAL ROLE

There are some things that the federal government can do immediately under its existing authorities, and that it should have done long ago. Other measures will have to await legislative action, importantly the re-authorization of the Adult Education Act, which will not occur until 1995. The former set of measures should be taken at once, and preparations for seeking legislation to implement the latter set should also be set in motion.

A Presidential Initiative

To succeed in implementing most of these measures, however, the federal government will have to overcome the negative image of ESL and raise its visibility as a national priority. To accomplish this, the President should direct the federal agencies that provide funding for ESL service to join together under the leadership of the Secretary of Education to launch A National Initiative For Adult ESL. The President should demonstrate his commitment to the initiative by announcing it in a White House address. In addition to helping ESL, this would provide an opportunity for the President to exert national leadership in opposing the shameful prejudice that is victimizing a great many immigrants who are legitimately living in this country.

The National Initiative should consist of a multi-year plan to implement all of the measures that the federal government must take and to work with states and private organizations to ensure that they do their part. It should begin by issuing departmental directives and regulations to implement the measures that can be taken immediately.

Immediate Actions

None of the following measures would require new legislation or increased federal spending. All are within the existing authorities of federal departments and can be accommodated by their existing budgets. These measures simply entail a long overdue increase in the priority of ESL and services related to it within federal programs.

1. ***Establishing an interdepartmental working group on ESL.*** Programs that provide ESL service to adults are distributed among the Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services and Justice. There is very little communication among these Departments about their ESL efforts and very little attempt to design programs so that they complement each other, deal with problems of transition, share expertise, address the problems posed by multiple and conflicting funding cycles, reporting requirements and data collection systems, or to take a great many other fairly simple measures that would greatly increase the effectiveness and efficiency of ESL service in the United States.

The President should direct the Department of Education to establish an interdepartmental working group with the mission of improving the coordination and quality of federal ESL programs. The working group should address the issues of coordination and efficiency just mentioned. In addition, it should be a mechanism for managing a government-wide effort to implement other near-term measures and promote a legislative agenda for ESL. Finally, it should serve as a locus of federal efforts to bring about more effective action on ESL issues by states, localities and the private sector.

All of these measures would be consistent with the goals of improving the efficiency and customer-orientation of government advocated by the present Administration.

2. Conducting a national assessment of the need and demand for adult ESL. It is hard to imagine how the ESL system can be improved when no one has more than a rough approximation of the extent and nature of need or demand. It is outrageous that this information is not available. Neither the Census nor any adult education surveys provide the basis for more than rough approximations, and these surveys provide no reliable information at all on key aspects of the need for service. To fill this information gap, the United States Department of Education should immediately launch a national assessment of the need and demand for adult ESL service.

Unlike the recent National Adult Literacy Survey, this assessment should focus on non-native speakers of English and should determine their proficiency in speaking and understanding English as well as their reading and writing abilities. It should use instruments that guard against response bias due to cultural differences. It should at the same time assess native-language literacy, general educational levels and aspirations, problems of interacting with American culture, attitudes toward and problems experienced because of limited English proficiency, and other variables of importance for determining the nature and extent of the need and demand for adult ESL.[1]

Importantly, the assessment serves as a customer survey. That is, it should determine how many limited English speakers want ESL service, why they want it, what type of service they want, whether they are or have been enrolled in ESL classes, whether those classes provided them with satisfactory service (a customer orientation), whether they have ever been denied access to ESL service and why, whether they have made use of ESL services more than once (and if so, what their careers in ESL have been), and what difficulties they have faced in making transitions within and out of the adult ESL system. Because language learning and participation in adult ESL programs are often long term processes, the initial survey should be followed by a longitudinal panel study of a representative sample of limited English proficient adults.

There is a crippling lack of reliable and in-depth information about the limited English population in the United States. Without reliable information on the dimensions of both the need and demand for service it is impossible to develop the details of plans to meet either. It is also impossible to fully develop plans for improving the quality of service without knowing more than we now know about the people who both want and need ESL instruction.

The Department of Education has ample research funds that can be used for a national ESL assessment, and it should initiate such an effort immediately, so that at least initial findings can be available during the process of reauthorizing the Adult Education Act in 1995.

*3. **Mapping the adult ESL system.*** The lack of adequate information about the need for ESL service is matched by the lack of reliable information on the nature of service now provided. Until the present system is thoroughly understood, efforts to improve it may be inadequate or misdirected. Neither the Department of Education nor any other agency presently gathers more than fragmentary information about the service system. The federal departments that fund ESL should take steps to remedy this problem.

In particular, reporting requirements for programs receiving funds from any federal program that provides ESL service should be expanded to include a more detailed description of the service provided and the numbers, retention and progress of students, reported in such a way that duplicate counting is minimized. States, localities and programs should also be required to provide unduplicated information on funding streams for ESL service. Finally, they should be required to report information on staff, terms of employment, training, curricula and other key aspects of the ESL system. The Department of Education should aggregate this information to create a far more comprehensive map of the dimensions, accomplishments, and shortcomings of ESL service than is presently available.

*4. **Supporting a program of research on adult ESL aimed at improving practice.*** The Department of Education should also set aside a portion of its research funds to investigate topics that are of urgent importance to advancing the state of practice in ESL. Among these are the use of native language literacy instruction, intensive instructional models, facilitating transition among programs and components, student assessment, the best uses of technology, the effectiveness of various models for providing family literacy, job training and other specialized services to limited English speakers, the best means to link these services with more traditional forms of instruction, and a variety of other program design issues such as the optimal number of hours and sequence of instruction for different types of students.

Ideally, the Department should implement this agenda by creating a new Center for Research on Adult ESL within its research division, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

5. Removing the bias against adult ESL. The Departments of Education, Labor and Health and Human Services should use their rule making authorities to end underservice of limited English speakers in programs that might provide them with ESL service. In particular, they should require that programs receiving JTPA, JOBS, Even Start and Perkins Act vocational education funds must serve limited English speakers at least in proportion to their representation in the population eligible for service, and regulations that make such requirements difficult to implement should be amended. By itself, this would create a significant increase in service and opportunity for limited English adults.

6. Establishing model professional and performance standards. The Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy should use some of its National Program funds to start the process of upgrading ESL staff and programs. It should provide funding to develop and disseminate model standards for ESL teacher certification and model process and outcome standards for ESL programs. These funds should be provided either to established professional organizations or to commissions representing the field as a whole convened by the National Institute for Literacy or some other qualified agency.

The lack of consensus about what qualifications ESL teachers should have, and the shortage of proposals that tackle many of the tough issues surrounding this sensitive topic, are clearly barriers to improved service. Absent any authoritative proposals, most states and programs require no qualifications that are specially relevant to ESL.

Likewise, in developing program performance standards in response to requirements of the National Literacy Act of 1991, most states have included no standards specific to ESL, nor have they established that their more general standards are suited to this service. The standards process is a unique opportunity to make progress on some of the most difficult problems of ESL at the program level.

For example, model standards and quality indicators could make a great contribution by prescribing that programs establish adequate plans and processes to facilitate transition of students within and among ESL programs and between these programs and other education and training activities. Model standards could also assist programs, and agencies that supervise them, to understand the nature and effectiveness of present efforts and plan improvements by requiring programs to gather qualitative data on students served, the types of service they are receiving and the outcomes of participating in ESL classes. Finally, model standards could help programs meet learner needs by prescribing that they develop evaluation frameworks that are flexible enough to accommodate the great diversity of learner abilities and goals.

Leadership in the form of well-supported and authoritative model standards for both teachers and programs would go a long way toward improving program quality. At present, the question of whether compliance with model standards should be required can be deferred. In the first instance, it would be better to invest in an active dissemination effort aimed at helping states and local programs to adopt model standards for adult ESL. After enough time has passed for this dissemination effort to have some effect, both it and the effectiveness of standards in improving service should be reassessed, and any adjustments that are required should be made.

Leadership in terms of establishing some professional goals for ESL is well within the authority of the Department of Education and should have been exercised long ago.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: THE ADULT EDUCATION ACT

These measures will require changes in legislation and, in some cases, additional funding to meet the need and demand for ESL service. The Administration should propose them and Congress should adopt them in the process of re-authorizing the Adult Education Act in 1995.

1. Separating the administration of adult ESL from ABE and GED. Congress should disentangle responsibility for ESL from responsibility for ABE and GED by creating a separate Office of Adult ESL headed by a Director of ESL in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. The new director should be on an equivalent status with the Director of Adult Education and Literacy, who would retain responsibility for ABE and GED. The ESL Director should have responsibility for administering all funds appropriated under the Adult Education Act for the support of ESL (below) and for the monitoring and improvement of ESL service nationwide. In this latter respect, the director should have the authority and responsibility to assist other Departments to enhance the effectiveness of ESL service they provide, as well as to coordinate federal, state and local efforts nationwide.

To facilitate the performance of these functions, the Director of ESL should chair the interdepartmental working group proposed above and manage the technical assistance activities recommended below. Finally, legislation creating a new Office of ESL should ensure that it is provided with an adequate budget and the expert staff required to carry out its responsibilities.

In addition, states that have more than 10 percent of the ESL population in need of service nationwide should be required to establish separate offices and directors of ESL, and federal funds should be made available to cover the additional administrative costs.

No one wishes to increase public bureaucracy in this day and age, but the case for new administrative arrangements in the ESL field is overwhelming. The body of this report establishes that the present administrative and financial links to ABE and GED are fatal to ESL service in the United States. Until they are severed, there is very little chance that an adequate service system can be developed. By placing clear responsibility for developing and managing ESL service in separate federal and state offices, Congress would create accountability for ESL and ensure that the system no longer suffers from the neglect that has plagued it over the years. ESL is as different from ABE and GED as any of the other educational services that are presently administered separately by the Department of Education are from each other. It is only an accident of history that ESL and other adult education services have been so unhappily joined together.

2. Establishing separate and equitable funding for adult ESL. At the same time it establishes an Office of ESL, Congress should separate funding for ESL from funding for ABE and GED. The Adult Education Act should contain a separate authorization for ESL, and ESL funding should become a separate line item in the budget of the Department of Education.

To avoid contention with ABE and GED providers, the initial authorization for state grants to support ESL and ABE/GED, respectively, should be based on the total amount that states report they spent for each service in the year of enactment of this change. For example, if states spent 40 percent of their state grant funds to provide ESL service in the year of enactment, Congress should authorize an amount for ESL that is equal to 40 percent of the total authorized for ESL, ABE and GED. Appropriations committees would then decide how much of these separate authorizations they wish to fund. This proportional division should apply only to funds authorized under the present state grant program of the Adult Education Act. It should not apply to additional provisions in the Act recommended below.

In addition, Congress should establish a separate formula for allocating funds appropriated for ESL among the states. The formula should be based on the relative number of limited English proficient adults in each state. The Secretary of Education should have the responsibility for determining this percentage and updating it periodically, using Census figures and/or the results of the ESL assessment proposed above. ABE/GED funds should continue to be allocated by the present formula, which is based on the relative number of adults in each state who have not completed high school.

The reasons for separating ESL funding are the same as those for separating administration. The proposed method for dividing funds would authorize the same portion of state grant funding to ESL and ABE/GED as they received in the year of enactment. As a result, neither ABE/GED nor ESL could claim that they were worse off. In addition, the proposed method of distribution would remedy the present practice of distributing all Adult Education Act state grant funds according to a formula appropriate only to ABE/GED. By distributing ESL funds according to the need for ESL service, the federal government would provide somewhat more assistance to states in which the need is particularly great.

Any concerns that locking in the present division of state grant funds might lead to over-spending on ESL or under-spending on ABE/GED are almost certainly groundless. Both services are greatly under funded, and the need for both will certainly continue at its present level, or at a higher level, for the five year authorization period of the Adult Education Act. If there were any dramatic change in the need or demand for service, the issue could be revisited by both authorizing and appropriations committees. The imperative to separate ESL from ABE/GED funding is very strong, and using the percentage distribution that has resulted from state choices about how to allocate funds is an equitable way to divide resources.

3. ***Providing special impact aid funds.*** Redistributing funds within the present Adult Education Act state grant program will not, by itself, provide the support required to meet either the demand or need for ESL service. As part of the Adult Education Act, Congress should appropriate special impact aid funds to those states that contain large numbers of limited English proficient adults. This special aid is more than justified. ESL is a national problem that heavily impacts particular areas. Most of the heavily-impacted states already contribute far more than the federal government to ESL service and are unable to expand their efforts much farther. Finally, the federal government has a responsibility to assist states due to the fact that much of the growth in demand has been caused by federal immigration policies.

There are many ways in which a reasonable and fair impact aid program might be structured. One system would be to target funding on states that have 10 percent or more of the number of limited English proficient adults living in the United States. To reward and encourage state efforts, funds should be distributed by a formula based on both the relative number of limited English adults in each state and state efforts to serve them.

For example, from the funds appropriated, an initial allocation might be made to each state based on the number of limited English adults, and states would be eligible to receive their allocation based on a dollar-for-dollar match of federal funds for any state adult education spending for ESL that exceeds the minimum matching requirement for ESL funds received from the existing Adult Education Act state grant program. If any state was unable to draw down its allocation, the balance of funds could be distributed to other qualifying states. By a formula such as this, the need for impact aid funds would diminish if at any time the demand for ESL services diminishes, because states would presumably be reluctant to spend their limited funds on a service for which there is a receding demand.

There are also many reasonable ways to estimate how large this impact aid fund should be. The proposed federal assessments of need, demand and service should provide the information required to define the options with a much greater degree of precision than is now possible. This is one of the reasons why it is very important to initiate those assessments as quickly as possible.

As discussed above, the information available indicates that approximately $400 million per year in additional funding nationwide would be an appropriate amount to address the unmet demand for ESL service. However, if proposals for expanding service by existing JOBS, JTPA, Even Start and vocational education programs were adopted, those programs would make a contribution to serving the unmet demand. As a result, an impact aid fund of $200-$300 million per year would be on the order of magnitude required.

4. Shifting the emphasis of adult ESL funding and service. Simply increasing funding for existing ESL service may make a contribution to meeting existing demand, but it will not meet national needs. As explained above, one goal of improving ESL service in America must be to shift the emphasis of service away from the linear model of teaching language and literacy for its own sake to more specialized services that bring more immediate and tangible benefits. The federal government should support this change in emphasis by requiring that half of all funds allocated to ESL from the existing Adult Education state grant program, and half of all special impact aid funds, must be spent on priority special services. These should at least include vocational training that integrates language and literacy instruction, workplace education, preparation for higher education, family literacy and preparation for citizenship.

This earmarking of funds would leave states with half of federal funding for ESL and all of their own source funding to spend on traditional service models, if they choose. But it would provide a much-needed stimulus for programs to diversify their service offerings and better meet the needs of learners. The results of this initiative should be closely monitored, however. The Department of Education should be required to track its effect on ESL service and learners. The Department should report to Congress after three years whether this initiative should be modified or continued.

5. Supporting citizenship education. Starting in 1993, the first of the three million Amnesty participants became eligible for American citizenship. Many members of the Amnesty population, as well as a great many other immigrants, will require assistance in meeting the requirements of the naturalization process. One form of assistance that those seeking citizenship will require is ESL instruction. Of course, at least some immigrants have always required this type of assistance, but the addition of the large number of Amnesty participants to the population eligible for citizenship will place a significant additional burden on the nation's ESL providers, as well as on other social service providers that offer assistance to immigrants.

As a supplement to the impact aid fund proposed above, Congress should appropriate funds to help Amnesty participants complete the citizenship process. Out of fairness, all immigrants seeking citizenship should be eligible for services supported by these funds. Approximately $812 million appropriated for Amnesty was unspent. Congress should re-appropriate this amount to be spent over a five year-period to help Amnesty participants and other immigrants prepare for citizenship.

For the sake of simplicity, the terms of funding should be the similar to those for Amnesty. States should receive funds in proportion to the number of immigrants requiring service. The use of funds should be restricted to providing immigrants with information and assistance required to comply with the requirements of the naturalization process. To assist applicants in completing this process, and to help them gain the communication skills required for civic participation, each citizenship applicant should be eligible for at least 100 hours of ESL instruction, which states could support with funds provided by their allocation from the federal government.

Instruction for 100 hours is the amount of service that ESL providers commonly estimate is required to bring about any significant learning gains. States should try to exceed this floor. If special citizenship funds are inadequate for those purposes, states should be required to establish procedures that will facilitate the transition of citizenship candidates who need and want more ESL instruction to ESL classes supported by other sources.

Due to jurisdictional boundaries between Congressional committees and federal departments, it is possible that a citizenship program of this sort could not be included in the Adult Education Act or administered by the proposed Director of ESL. But to the extent possible, both Congress and the Executive should try to include it in the Act. This would greatly facilitate administration, coordination and oversight of most federal sources of ESL funding. Precisely because these sources are fairly small, and the ultimate recipients of funds are often the same, consolidating authorities and administration for major federal ESL initiatives would greatly improve the efficiency of operation. In particular, it would allow for more systematic planning of the nation's presently fragmented ESL service system.

6. Redirecting workforce literacy funds. Employer-supported ESL instruction is an important and growing part of the field. Well conceived employer-supported programs provide limited English proficient adults the opportunity for job retention and advancement by providing them with the skills that employers consider most important. In the years to come, a large part of the American workforce will need continual skills upgrading, and the only way this need can possibly be met is if employers are willing to support most of the service. As a result, the federal government should encourage workplace education, including ESL, in every way it can.

The only present federal effort directly targeted on workplace education is the Department of Education's National Workplace Literacy Program, funded at about $20 million in recent years. The program supports delivery of ESL and other adult education services to workers by adult education providers in collaboration with employers and unions. But the program is clearly too small to make more than a dent in the need for service. Rather than supporting service provision, its emphasis should be changed to building the capacity of adult education programs, community colleges and other suppliers to provide and market this service to companies.

Too few providers know what form workplace education services should take, and too often they simply offer companies slightly altered versions of their standard courses. Such offerings rarely meet the needs of either companies or workers. Moreover, too few public suppliers know how to negotiate both the type of service required and adequate reimbursement for it from employers. By investing the limited workforce literacy funds in training programs, materials and technical assistance for suppliers, the federal government would exert more leverage on the expansion and improvement of ESL and other workplace services than it would by continuing to invest in service provision.

By itself, this redirection of the Workplace Literacy Program will not be enough to give workplace education the shot in the arm that it, and the nation's economy, require. To meet the national need for workplace education, larger and more ambitious measures must be adopted by the federal government, states, industry and the education community. Setting forth these measures is beyond the scope of a report on adult ESL, but they have been fully discussed elsewhere.[2] Nevertheless, redirecting the Workplace Literacy Program would be an important start in the right direction.

7. *Strengthening CBOs.* The National Literacy Act of 1991 contained a provision assuring CBOs "direct and equitable access" to federal Adult Education Act funds. In practice, many state administrators who control these funds have set conditions for access that preclude most CBOs from receiving support. Because CBOs are important partners in the ESL effort, providing a base of support for their operations must be part of any effort to build a stronger ESL system. To avoid the problems of implementing the existing provision in the National Literacy Act, it should be replaced by a percentage set-aside for CBOs of federal state grant funds, as well as of the proposed impact aid and citizenship funds, provided under the Adult Education Act. In the ESL field, CBOs serve about 5 percent of the students, but they receive a far smaller portion of federal support. As a result, the set-aside of ESL funds for CBOs should be about 5 percent, or slightly larger to allow them to expand their role in the service system.

8. ***Expanding technical assistance and extending funding periods.*** All of the legislative changes suggested above would launch the ESL field into dramatically new directions. It will take some time for those programs to adapt to change, and many of them will need help in making the adjustments. As a result, 15 percent of all funds administered by the proposed Office of ESL should be set aside to form a pool for technical assistance and program upgrading.[3] Centers of expertise in ESL service delivery should be established in each region of the country to assist in program restructuring, curriculum development, assessment, staff training, coordination of services among programs and within communities and other essential functions. These centers might be located in some of the State Resource Centers created by the National Literacy Act of 1991, or established under other auspices.

In addition, the Office of ESL should provide assistance to the ESL field by supporting the development of model programs and curricula to investigate and demonstrate promising methods of instruction and program design, encourage excellence and encourage the growth of service in high priority areas, such as family literacy and job training for limited English adults. The Office should also invest in the development of model programs for training teachers and administrators at the MA, doctoral and other levels. Although the need for more staff with solid professional credentials is recognized in the ESL field, there are few high quality graduate programs that specialize in adult ESL. Finally, the Office should provide support for a clearinghouse for research and program information that focuses on adult ESL.

Technical assistance in any or all of the forms just mentioned would make a great difference in improving the quality of ESL service. An equally great contribution would be made by extending the funding periods of demonstration grants from their present one year or 18 months cycles to three years. At present, ESL programs receive small amounts of money, and the paperwork and uncertainty created by receiving support for one year at a time is a considerable burden and disincentive to innovation. If demonstration programs are to advance the field, programs will need time and resources to plan and systematically implement new practices. For demonstration programs to take hold in the field, the agencies that support them must find ways to institutionalize successful practices and provide ongoing support for continued innovation.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES: OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

1. Improving ESL service under JOBS. If the federal government issues regulations ending the present underservice of limited English welfare recipients by the JOBS program, it will have solved only part of the problem of helping this group to benefit from the education and training services offered by JOBS. An equally great problem arises from the fact that, in most states, federal JOBS funding pays only a small portion of the cost of the education and training that participants receive. Most funding comes from other adult education sources and, as a result, most service is generic and not targeted at the special needs of welfare recipients seeking employment. As a result, any federal welfare reform effort should contain provisions that provide full funding for the cost of the education and training services, including ESL, that JOBS recipients receive from federal and state JOBS appropriations. This would create incentives for education providers to develop and deliver ESL and other services that can truly help welfare recipients gain the skills they need to become self-sufficient.

2. Improving ESL services for refugees. As explained in the body of this report, the Refugee Resettlement Program provides at most eight months of ESL training for refugees. Moreover, it has no specific budget for ESL or any other form of education and training. Clearly the period of service is too short, and adequate levels of education should be assured. The program should be amended to provide a continuous program of education, including ESL, for up to two years for all refugees who require it, and sufficient funds should be earmarked for this purpose. Exactly how large these funds should be depends on the needs of the refugees, about which there is no adequate information. The administrator of the program should be directed to develop need and cost estimates on an expedited basis, and the necessary funds should be made available.

In expanding educational services for refugees, special attention should be accorded to programs that will help professionals and skilled trades people to become certified to practice their specialties in the United States. This has always been an unmet need, but it appears to be increasing as the refugee stream contains an increasing percentage of highly educated former political prisoners and economic refugees from Eastern Europe. The United States should take full advantage of this "brain drain" by helping these people to gain the language, literacy and other qualifications that they need to apply their skills in the United States.

THE STATE ROLE

Many of the measures that states should take to improve ESL service are stated or implied in the discussion of federal initiatives above. In particular states should:

- separate the administration and financing of ESL from that of other educational services at the state, local and programmatic level (in the case of large programs, at least);
- to the extent possible, consolidate federal and state funding for ESL (including funding of for-credit ESL) into a single ESL budget administered by a single agency;
- diversify ESL service offerings to place greater emphasis on areas of specialized service and less emphasis on generic "multi-level" programs that adhere to the linear model;
- develop reliable data on the funding and administration of ESL service in their states and on the need and demand for service, and use these data for strategic planning to improve service;
- develop standards for teacher certification and program accountability that are appropriate for ESL service;
- initiate more extensive training and technical assistance programs aimed at improving the quality of instruction and program design;

- eliminate the underservice of limited English proficient adults in JOBS, JTPA, vocational education, family literacy and other programs;

- develop stronger initiatives to stimulate the growth of workplace education by improving the capacity of programs to provide this service.

There is no reason why states cannot take these measures without federal leadership, and they should not await federal initiatives and mandates to move ahead on all these fronts. At the very least, they should recognize that the federal initiatives identified above are very much in their interest, because those initiatives would help states to meet the increasing demand and need for ESL service. States, therefore, should actively advocate and support a federal ESL Initiative.

There are, however, some measures that only states can take. After all, they are responsible for administering ESL service, and almost every aspect of that service needs improvements that states must specify and carry out in detail.

At present ESL is a maze of funding streams and service agencies. States should engage in strategic planning exercises that take a holistic view of ESL service and design a service system required to meet their needs. For example, they should identify common goals and standards of practice for ESL service statewide, clarify the missions of different providers and eliminate needless duplication, ensure that funding is equitably distributed and meets the requirements of agency missions, and they should coordinate the efforts of all agencies and programs. To accomplish these goals, six issues deserve special attention:

1. Increasing the effectiveness of for-credit and non-credit ESL. For-credit ESL is entirely a state-controlled service. In a great many institutions it does not provide students with the skills they need to take other credit courses, or to the extent that it does the process is so lengthy and difficult that a large percentage of students fail to complete it. States should review the performance of their for-credit ESL programs and require more joint planning of offerings by ESL and other faculty, as well as other changes that will ensure that this service meets the needs of students and institutions in a timely way. For example, they should consider incorporating a special focus on the language and literacy skills required for the occupational areas or courses of study their students intend to pursue. They should also review admissions standards to ensure that students who find themselves in academic institutions stand a reasonable chance of success with the assistance of better designed for-credit offerings. Finally, they should investigate allegations of profiteering by institutions that offer for-credit ESL.

At the same time, states should review non-credit ESL offerings. These programs are by no means exclusively intended to prepare students for academic study. But at least some portion of the students enrolled in them have that goal. Despite this fact, most non-credit programs have no particular focus on skills needed for college work. For the most part, they are generic language and literacy upgrade programs.

In fairness to students, and to remove some of the burden from for-credit ESL, states should develop models for non-credit curricula that allow those students who plan to pursue higher education to gain at least some of the skills needed for subjects they expect to study. The focus need not be on preparation for specific college courses or degree programs. A more generic focus on areas of study and employment such as "health professions" or "business administration" might be more useful. But some effort should be made to provide non-credit students who want to attend college with the level and type of instruction that will enable them to make easy transitions to for-credit courses. In short, states should develop a continuum of non-credit ESL, for-credit ESL and regular course instruction. At present, these are usually discrete worlds of endeavor that rarely communicate with each other. Students often have great difficulty moving from one of these areas to the others, and this is a significant barrier to higher education for limited English adults.

2. Improving transition throughout the adult ESL system. In a sense, the problems of linking for-credit and non-credit ESL are simply special cases of a more general transition problem that is highly damaging to ESL service. Students do not know that their options or opportunities for service and skills gained in one program are not easily transferred to others. If service is further diversified, as proposed above, this problem will surely become worse. At a minimum, states should create clear definitions of each type of service statewide, including clear and relevant indications of both the preconditions of service and the skills attained when service is completed. A system of certificates for completion of various programs or program components that indicates the level and type of skill attainment may be useful for these purposes.[4] At the same time, states should require that at least the larger providers of ESL must establish one-stop shopping centers where students can receive information and counseling about their options for further instruction, and that they should develop policies and processes to facilitate transition.

Finally, states should eliminate duplication and improve coordination of program offerings. Ultimately, their goal should be to construct systems in which the services needed by all students are available, and all students can find a path from any one part of the service system to any other part without great difficulty. In carrying out the strategic planning to achieve this goal, states should conduct (or require localities to conduct) community needs assessments.

For most ESL services, the relevant unit of analysis for improving the structure of the service system is the community in which students live. States should conduct community needs assessments to determine what services are required in each community and which are available. They should then use this information to fill gaps in the service system, introduce curricular and staffing changes, plan transition paths and procedures, allocate funds to areas of greatest need, identify duplication of efforts and streamline administration. Community needs assessments can also be used for program improvement in a more fine-grained way. For example, they can be used to improve understanding of the skills and aspirations students bring with them to ESL classes and to adjust both curricula and transition paths to better fit the needs of learners.

3. Placing greater emphasis on integrated skills training, workplace education and other vocational training for limited English adults. In most states vocational training for ESL students is seriously neglected. Because of the needs of many ESL students to improve their economic status, and the needs of areas in which they are heavily concentrated for their human capital, states should make the expansion of vocational and workplace education programs for limited English adults a priority. In most states this will require considerable curriculum development, labor market testing and negotiation with providers. But unless states energetically take up this challenge, many students will be deprived of economic opportunities, and many areas will fail to gain needed skills. Vocational and workplace training should not be the end of the road for students that have other aspirations, and part of state systems planning should be to devise ways for students to continue to improve their skills. But high-quality vocational and workplace training is a realistic solution to the immediate needs of many limited English adults and an important contribution to the labor markets in which they live.

4. Improving the working conditions of teachers. The fact that most ESL teachers are part-time employees without benefits is both a form of economic exploitation and a short-sighted neglect of the human capital that makes programs run. Part-time employment frustrates efforts to upgrade the quality of the teaching staff. It also frustrates efforts to improve programs in other ways, because teachers do not have enough involvement in any particular program to contribute to making it better or master new practices that may be introduced.

With limited resources, there is inevitably a tradeoff between investments in staff and in numbers of students served. But every other area of education must make this tradeoff, and all other areas have decided that a qualified professional teaching force is a prerequisite for providing an acceptable level of service. Because at least some very able ESL teachers who have job security and benefits from other employment are available, the ESL field can probably tolerate a higher ratio of part-time staff than would be acceptable in other areas of education. In their strategic planning, states should allocate resources to increase the percentage of full-time ESL teachers system-wide over a period of years to 60 percent or more.

It is possible that, the federal government's plans to introduce national healthcare coverage will eliminate at least some of the problems with benefits that part-time teachers now face. But even in the best of circumstances, national healthcare will not become fully effective for several years, and its precise terms have yet to be established. Moreover, part-time teachers, like other workers, deserve the benefits of access to group liability, pension and life insurance plan, as well as healthcare coverage. At the very least, states should make it possible for part-time teachers to participate in group plans for healthcare and other benefits on a voluntary basis, and states and/or local programs should make at least some contribution to these plans. States are often able to buy benefit packages at discount rates, and they should pass along this advantage to their part-time employees.

*5. **Emphasizing quality not quantity.*** The issue of part-time teaching staff is a special case of a more fundamental decision that states must make: whether to emphasize the number of ESL students served or the quality of service. Because most ESL students achieve only limited learning gains — at most moving up one level in a multi-level program — more emphasis clearly must be placed on quality of service. States must insist on the resources to at least meet the demand for service with high quality programs. If those resources are not forthcoming, responsibility to students and the community dictates that states should ensure that those students who are served achieve learning gains that enable them to meet their goals for increased opportunities in their economic and social lives.

*6. **Demanding more help from the federal government.*** The states in which the vast majority of limited English proficient adults are concentrated have a strong claim on the federal government. They have been left to shoulder most of the burden for services that are important to the national economy and very difficult to provide. Moreover, most of these states have done as much as can reasonably be expected to take up this challenge. And the challenge itself, has in large part been created by federal immigration policies. In these circumstances, the states should be more vocal in demanding federal help with ESL service.

Too often states vent their frustrations by concentrating on limiting services to immigrants or limiting immigration itself. Large numbers of immigrants are already here to stay, and it is in the interest of states to ensure that they are well served by ESL and other public services. Rather than focusing on restrictions, states should be the leaders in insisting that the federal government do its fair share. In the ESL field, this means they should actively lobby for the federal policy agenda set forth above.

THE ESL FIELD

No program for improving adult ESL service can succeed without the active involvement of teachers, administrators and scholars who are associated with this field. They must support and contribute to the federal and state initiatives recommended above. At the programmatic level they must lead the effort to improve all the many details of program design and instructional practice. Most ESL professionals are ill-prepared to play an active role in rebuilding their field. Most have been relegated to a passive role for too long. To help them define and express their views, the ESL field must develop a professional infrastructure that it now lacks. Three steps are of particular importance.

1. Developing a national professional organization for adult ESL in the United States. Among the aims of such an organization should be to improve professional knowledge of all aspects of adult ESL service, to sponsor training and technical assistance activities, to develop models for key aspects of service such as teacher certification and program quality, and to advocate the cause of ESL service at the federal, state and local levels. Such an organization must provide a voice for one of the presently silent constituencies of ESL. Unless the professionals involved with this service system are willing to stand up for it, there is little chance of improvement from government or any other source. Leaders of the present ESL professional organization, TESOL, consider its focus to be on issues of language education that are international in scope, although many of its conference sessions and other activities have value for teachers in the United States. Either TESOL must develop a stronger focus on the particular needs of American ESL teachers and on advocacy, in particular, or a new professional organization must be formed.

2. Developing a leadership cadre in the adult ESL field. Few ESL professionals are broadly knowledgeable in the field or have the skills needed for leadership of their peers in accomplishing broad-gauged change. Few have the skills required to advocate the ESL cause to government and other agencies that control its fate. Mobilizing the ESL field and giving it a voice requires the development of a leadership cadre that will have the breadth of knowledge and skills that all but a few ESL professionals lack. There should be a systematic investment in developing this human capital by programs such as leadership forums, fellowships, cross-training and job exchanges. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of filling this leadership gap. Without effective leadership there is very little chance that the ESL field will be able to plead its own cause, contribute to designing plans for improvement by government or other agencies, or carry out any plans that may be adopted.

3. Developing a coalition for ESL. While an effectively organized ESL field can accomplish a great deal, it will need allies in advocating policy and program change by government and local agencies. In the best of circumstances, ESL is too small and obscure to stand alone. It will need the help of others to become a visible national priority. As a result, the ESL field should join with its natural allies — such as advocates of immigrant causes, spokesmen for ethnic groups, as well as other educational and human service organizations — to form a coalition for ESL. To be effective, the coalition should be more than a loose alliance. It should have an institutional embodiment, resources, staff and an action agenda. Among its first priorities must be advocating the changes in federal and state policy recommended above. To promote those changes and other improvements in the field, it should mount a sustained effort to raise the visibility of ESL by a vigorous public information campaign similar to the campaign mounted for literacy in the late 1980s. Such an effort should be aimed at removing the stigma now attached to ESL and many of its beneficiaries. It should also be aimed at raising awareness of the nature and extent of the problems of limited English speakers in the United States and the national stake in solving those problems.

PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY

Because of the importance of ESL and the many hurdles it must overcome to meet the nation's needs, this field is a worthy focus for private philanthropy. At present no private foundation concentrates in this area, and philanthropic participation is limited to occasional contributions to particular programs or undertakings. While government funding can and should accomplish much to improve the quality and quantity of ESL service, there are at least two essential functions that government cannot perform. These should be the focus of one or more large foundations concerned with improving the quality of American life.

1. Supporting the development of the adult ESL field. It is hard to imagine how the ESL field could find the resources to form an effective national organization, create a leadership development program and forge a working coalition with other groups without support from philanthropic sources. Government support would, of necessity, mute the essential advocacy role of all these undertakings. Support by dues and contributions would, at least in the early stages, be inadequate. Private philanthropy can achieve enormous leverage for change in the ESL field, and in American society as a whole, by investing in these essential functions. Indeed, unless foundations embrace this cause, progress in ESL may come slowly, if at all, because a strong and vocal ESL field is one of the preconditions for progress.

2. Supporting the development of innovative approaches. The existing knowledge base about how to provide and improve ESL service has developed in an unplanned and unsystematic way. It has largely come from the experiences of practitioners and occasional forays into new territory by scholars. Obviously, the possibilities for new discoveries in this way are in large part bounded by the state of practice and scholarship at any given time. Obviously, too, many important ideas fall by the wayside for lack of resources to develop and disseminate them. There is a need in the adult ESL field, as in all fields, for small amounts of funds to support research and practice that breaks with the conventional wisdom and shows promise of leading to major conceptual change. In any field, an important part of the major innovation comes from efforts such as these. For the ESL field, there is virtually no source of funding to nurture truly innovative ideas. This is precisely the type of support that government is least likely to provide, but it would be a low-cost, high-gain way for private philanthropy to contribute to progress in adult ESL.

ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

As discussed in the body of this report, there are a number of substantial national advocacy organizations that might take up the ESL cause but have failed to do so because of other priorities. Organizations representing ethnic minority groups and arguing for the interests of immigrants are among the most likely candidates. While ESL may not be their top priority, these organizations should become more active on its behalf. At least one important reason for this is the close connection of adult ESL to issues of jobs, access to social services, education, citizenship and inter-generational issues that are of central concern to these groups. They should join with the ESL field in a national coalition to develop the language and literacy service system that many of their constituents want and need. Their prestige, expertise and connections would make an enormous difference in such an effort. In fact, because many of them are well-established institutions, and the ESL field scarcely has an organizational identity at all today, one or more advocacy organizations with an interest in ESL should consider taking the lead in forming a coalition.

The most important barrier that must be crossed in a concerted effort to improve ESL service is not deciding who should begin it, but for someone to begin.

ENDNOTES

Chapter Two

1. Census document CPH-L-96, Table ED90-5.

2. This number is arrived at in two ways. First, we add the 5.8 million adults who say they speak English "well" on the Census to the 5.8 million in the lower categories of "not at all" and "not well", bringing the Census based count up to 11.6 million adults needing ESL (or, in round numbers, about 12 million). This group is included because the 1982 English Language Proficiency Study found that non-native adult speakers of English in this category were not proficient in reading and writing English. Other evidence from the 1990 Census, including the high rate of undercount for Hispanics (4.96% or 1.2 million people) and Asians (2.3% or 170,000 people) and immigration from non-English speaking countries after the Census (estimated at between 500,000-600,000 per year) suggest that the number is closer to 14 million.

Another way to derive this same number is to use the NALS data. On average, foreign born adults scored lower than their native born counterparts, with all foreign born groups except White and Asian/Pacific Islanders showing average scores in Level I (foreign born Whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders had average scores in Level II). Analysis of the data shows that 11 million immigrants are in Level I alone. We do not know how many are in the other levels. When the 2.8 million U.S. born adults who are limited English Proficient who may be in Level I or Level II are added, the indications from the NALS are that 14 million or more adults need ESL.

3. Based on a special run of the 1% Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) by the Urban Institute, hereafter referred to as 1% PUMS.

4. 1% PUMS.

5. Irwin S. Kirsch, Ann Jungeblut, Lynn Jenkins, Andrew Kolstad, Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey, (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993).

6. 1% PUMS.

7. CPH-L-96, Table ED90-5.

8. CPH-L-96, Table ED90-6.

9. 1% PUMS.

10. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1991, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992).

11. Based on estimates of adult ESL student participation rates in federal, state and locally funded adult ESL projects.

12. For example, according to Domingo Rodriguez, Coordinator for Adult ESL and Citizenship in the Los Angeles Unified School District the average adult ESL class size in the District is 47.

13. Massachusetts is one example of this, according to Rich Levy, program specialist in the Massachusetts Department of Education.

14. A.L.L. Points Bulletin, newsletter of the Department of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy, and Jan M. Ignash, Tracking the Liberal Arts over Sixteen Years: Trends and Implications, Paper presented at the 1992 Conference of the California Association for Institutional Research, 1992.

15. Estimate of Malcolm Young, Development Associates, Project Director for the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs.

16. According to Garrett Murphy, New York State Director of Adult Education, New York is one example of this.

17. U.S. Department of Education, National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs Second Interim Report--Profiles of Client Characteristics, (Development Associates, Arlington, VA, 1993).

18. 1% PUMS and Joseph R. Meisenheimer III, "How do Immigrants Fare in the U.S. Labor Market?", in Monthly Labor Review, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1992).

19. Meisenheimer.

20. 1% PUMS.

21. Robert L. Bach, Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities, (Ford Foundation: New York, NY 1993), pg. 36.

22. CPH-L-96, Table ED90-5.

23. CPH-L-96, Table ED90-5 and 1980 Detailed Population Characteristics, Table 256.

24. Southport analysis of immigration trends in Statistical Yearbook.

25. CPH-L-98, Table 4.

26. CPH-L-96, Table ED90-5.

27. CPH-4 and Southport analysis of general population data.

28. CPH-L-98, 1% PUMS and Southport analysis of data in U.S. GAO, Illegal Aliens: Despite Data Limitations, Current Methods Provide Better Population Estimates, Washington D.C.: General Accounting Office, 1993), GAO/PEMD-93-25.

29. See, for example, Forrest P. Chisman, The Missing Link: Workplace Education in Small Business, (Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1992); Paul E. Barton, Skills Employers Need: Time to Measure Them?, (Princeton, NJ, ETS Policy Information Center, 1990).

30. E.g. Wayne Cornelius, "Neo-Nativists Feed on Myopic Fears," Los Angeles Times, July 12, 1993.

31. Statistical Yearbook and CPH-1-1, Table 1.

32. 1% PUMS.

33. Lorraine M. McDonnell, Paul T. Hill, Newcomers in American Schools: Meeting the Educational Needs of Immigrant Youth, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Program for Research on Immigration Policy, 1993), pg. 7.

34. See Gail Weinstein-Shr and Elizabeth Quintero, eds., Immigrant Learners and Their Families: Literacy to Connect the Generations, (McHenry, IL, Delta Systems, 1993).

35. McDonnell, et al. pg. 105.

36. David Stewart, Immigration and Education: The Crisis and the Opportunities, (New York, NY, Lexington Books, 1992).

Chapter Three

1. Communication with Allene Grognet, Director, Center for Applied Linguistics Sunbelt Office.

2. Special analysis for the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis by Jeanne Lopez-Valadez, Director, Office of Applied Innovations, Northern Illinois University.

3. Ibid.

4. For instance, in Los Angeles, programs operated 24-hours a day to serve the need.

4. Westat, Immigration Reform and Control Act Report on the Legalized Population, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1992), (M-375).

5. Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), A Survey of Newly Legalized Persons in California, (San Diego, CA: CASAS, 1989).

6. According to the Conference report accompanying the FY 1994 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill, the carryover resulted from a decision by Congress to delay availability of some FY 92 funds into FY 93. (pg. 65). As a result, the $812 million is unspent, but most legalization applicants are no longer eligible for SLIAG funded services. Changing the legislation to reflect this would allow states to spend the funds to help newly legalized immigrants to get ESL and other services needed for citizenship.

7. For an extended discussion of the problems of second language families, see Gail Weinstein-Shr.

8. According to the Second Interim Report of the National Evaluation, 69% of new ESL clients were placed in beginning ESL classes while only 18% were in intermediate classes.

Chapter Four

1. Southport analysis of information in Open Doors, 1991, (New York, NY: Institute of International Education, 1991).

2. Second Interim Report.

3. Ibid. According to the national evaluation, about 4% of new ESL clients are served in private voluntary organizations funded with through the AEA.

4. Communication with Ray Eberhard, California State Director of Adult Education.

5. Communication with Richard Stiles, Adult Education Consultant to the California State Department of Education.

6. Second Interim Report.

7. Ignash.

8. Communication with Ed Geibel, program specialist at the Department of State.

9. Communication with Nancy Iris, program specialist at the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement.

10. Office of Refugee Resettlement document "English Language Training Completion Rates and Unit Costs" FY 1992.

11. Communication with Margo Pflager and Don Ranard, Center for Applied Linguistics.

12. Forrest P. Chisman and Renee S. Woodworth, The Promise of JOBS: Policies, Programs and Possibilities, (Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1992), pg. 13.

13. National Council of La Raza Fact Sheet, Undocumented Immigrants and Public Benefits. Also, in Californians Together: Defining the State's Role in Immigration, the California Senate Office of Research documents several studies of California counties that show the enrollment rates and cost to local government of immigrants. Overall, it appears that immigrants are not more likely to be on welfare than their U.S. born peers, but in communities such as Santa Clara county and Orange County, they may be disproportionately represented on welfare roles. Importantly, the report cites experts from across the country who conclude that "immigrants...put more into the system through taxes than they take out in services." (pgs. 29-35).

14. Communication with Garrett Murphy.

15. Chisman and Woodworth, pg. 37.

16. Center for Law and Education, "Final Perkins Act Regulations Undermine Provisions of the Act," Newsnotes, pg. 6

Chapter Five

1. Southport analysis of Immigration data in the Statistical Yearbook of the INS, 1991.

2. 1980 Detailed Population Characteristics, Table 256 and CPH-L-96 Table ED90-5 and other Census data, as explained in note 2, Section II.

3. In 1980, programs funded by the Adult Education Act served 396,000 ESL students, about one-third of current levels (conversation with Jim Parker, education program specialist, Department of Education).

4. Second Interim Report, pg. 62.

5. CASAS, 1989, pg. 4-16.

Chapter Six

1. See for instance, Federal Register, vol. 56. no. 223: Department of Education Notice of proposed priorities: National English Literacy Demonstration Program for Individuals of Limited English Proficiency.

2. See also Stephen Challis, Methods to Increase the Number of Successful Transfers Between Programs by Students in Adult Literacy Programming: A Research Report, (Manitoba, Canada: Secretary of State, Canada), 1991.

3. Spicer, et al. documents how learners often have unrealistic goals. They asked students in community college credit and non-credit ESL classes how long it would take for them to learn English. In many cases, the less previous education the student had, the less time they thought it would take.

4. To counteract this trend toward "ESL co-dependency", some programs encourage students to switch teachers after one cycle.

5. This is true even in the cases where the funding source mandates that they accept special needs students, including those who are "limited English proficient".

6. See also Kremer, Nick and Lynn Savage, Employment-Related Literacy Approaches for Limited English Proficient Adults, 1983; and Lopez-Valadez, Jeanne, Immigrant Workers and the American Worplace: The Role of Voc.Ed., (Columbus, OH, ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education), 1985.

7. The program now asks a counselor from the employment training center to visit ESL programs and to counsel students.

8. See discussion of Valdez v. Randall, in Benesch, pg. 59-60.

9. See Benesch, "ESL on Campus: Questioning Testing and Tracking Practices." in ESL in America: Myths and Possibilities, Ed. Sarah Benesch, 1991, 59-74 for a discussion on the practice of tracking language minority students into ESL classes at U.S. colleges.

10. National Literacy Act

11. Testing requirements vary from state to state: Some states mandate that all ESL and ABE students be tested with the same instrument (California requires the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), and Florida mandates the TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education). Others, such as Illinois, approve both ABE and ESL tests for adult basic education programs and programs choose the appropriate instrument for their students.

12. See also Sticht, Thomas G, "Measuring Adult Literacy: A response," in Toward Defining Literacy Ed. R.L. Venezky, D.A. Wagner and B.S. Cilberti, 1990, 48-53; Mickulecki, Larry and Paul Lloyd, The Impact of Workplace Literacy Programs: A New Model for Evaluating the Impact of Workplace Literacy Programs (Technical Report TR93-2), 1993; Brindley, Goeffrey, Assessing Achievement in the Learner-Centered Curriculum, 1989.

13. While the TABE and the ABLE purport to test general reading ability, the CASAS measures whether the person taking the test can complete certain competency tasks. The CASAS includes a listening comprehension component).

14. In fact, as Bob Berdan pointed out in a special analysis for the Southport Institute, the language of the questions that introduce the items is so complex that students might in some instances have greater difficulties understanding the question than completing the literacy task.

15. When standardized competency assessment systems, such as CASAS, are tied to a competency-based curriculum, they can be said to have curriculum validity as well.

16. See also McGrail, et.al.; Fingeret, Hanna Arlene, It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs, 1993; Wrigley, Heide Spruck and Gloria J.A. Guth, Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL, 1992.

17. See Wagner, Daniel A, Myths and Misconceptions in Adult Literacy: A Research and Development Perspective (Policy Brief 93-1), 1993.

18. Communication from Suzanne Leibman, special consultant for TESOL.

19. Wrigley and Guth, 1992.

20. See Crandall, JoAnn, "Professionalism and Professionalization of Adult ESL Literacy," TESOL Quarterly, 27 (Autumn 1993), 497-515.

21. Recognizing this fact, the California Teacher Training Institute has initiated a staff development program where experienced teachers can be trained to act as mentors to their less experienced colleagues.

22. Tibbits, J. et al, The Delivery and Content of Training for Adult Education Teachers and Volunteer Instructors, 1991.

23. See also Lytle, Susan L., Alisa Belzer and Rebecca Reumann, Invitations to Inquiry: Rethinking Staff Development in Adult Literacy Education (Technical Report TR92-2), 1992.

24. See also Crandall, 1993.

25. Auerbach, Elizabeth R, Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy, 1992; also Crandall; Lytle, et al; Wrigley and Guth.

26. For a full discussion of the abilities and difficulties of ESL literacy students, see Wrigley and Guth, 1992.

27. According to Donna Price Machado (winner of the 1993 TESOL Newbury House Award for Excellence in Teaching) in a telephone communication: the literacy tasks that students perform at work bear little resemblance to the typical ESL curriculum. After visiting students' worksites, she revised her entire curriculum, using materials such as a foreman's log, skills manuals and other materials that working students have to use every day.

28. Jeanne Lopez Valadez, Immigrant Workers and the American Workplace: The role of Voc.Ed., (Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education), 1985.

29. For more information, see also: Sivin-Kachala, Jay and Ellen Bialo, Software for Adult Literacy: Scope, Suitability, Available Sources of Information, and Implications for Federal Policy, 1989. (Paper prepared for the Office of Technology Assessment.); Soifer, R., et al, The Complete Theory-to-Practice Handbook of Adult Literacy: Curriculum Design and Teaching Approaches, 1990; Turner, Terilyn C, Literacy and Machines: An Overview of the Use of Technology in Adult Literacy Programs (Technical Report TR93-3), 1993; and Packer, Arnold H, Retooling the American Workforce: The Role of Technology in Improving Adult Literacy During the 1990s, 1988.

30. For a discussion of technology and ESL, see Inaam Mansoor, The Use of Technology in Adult ESL Programs: Current Practice--Future Promise. (Washington, D.C., The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis), 1993.

31. California is designing such a framework as part of its Educard system.

32. The Office of Technology Assessment, the National Center for Adult Literacy, and TESOL have all published technology surveys.

33. As some educators say, the field follows the motto: "If there is a spark of hope, come, let us water it."

Chapter Seven

1. Conversation with Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum.

2. Carol Clymer-Spradling, Quality, Standards and Accountability in ESL, (Washington, D.C.: Southport Institute for Policy Analysis), 1993.

3. Communication with Bob Berdan, Dean of Education, California State University at Long Beach.

4. James Madison, Notes of the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787, (New York: W.W. Norton), 1987.

5. Arnold H. Leibowitz, "The Official Character of Language in the United States: Literacy Requirements for Immigration, Citizenship, and Entrance into American Life," Aztlan, Vol. 15, No.1, 1984.

6. For example, some recent headlines: "Neo-Nativists Feed on Myopic Fears," LA Times, July 12, 1993; "Send Back Your Tired, Your Poor...," Time, June 21, 1993; "Sentiment Sours as Rate of Arrival Rises," USA Today, July 14, 1993; "Closing the Golden Door," Washington Post, July 29, 1993.

7. For an extended discussion of this subject, see Committee on Federalism and National Purpose, To Form a More Perfect Union: The Report of the Committee on Federalism and National Purpose, National Conference on Social Welfare, 1985.

Chapter Eight

1. ETS has already recognized the need for this data collection on the skill levels of this population, convening a seminar and in 1992 to discuss the need for a Spanish language National Adult Literacy Survey. ETS has yet to act on this proposal, however. In addition, Spanish speakers are about 50% of adults who are limited English proficient. Therefore, this proposed survey will only address half of the population in need.

2. See Chisman, The Missing Link: Workplace Education in Small Business.

3. The ideas in this section, as well as support for other recommendations, are found in JoAnn Crandall, Improving the Quality of Adult ESL Programs: Building the Nation's Capacity to Meet the Educational and Occupational Needs of Adults with Limited English Proficiency, (Washington, D.C.: Southport Institute for Policy Analysis), 1993.

4. The Center for Employment Training in San Jose, California, for instance, uses graduation certificates for GED completers, awards certificates for those who maintain perfect attendance, and throws socials and other events to encourage students and award their achievements.

SOURCES CITED

Alamprese, Judith A., and June S. Sivilli. Study of Federal Funding Sources and Services for Adult Education: Final Report. Washington, D.C.: Cosmos Corporation, 1992.

Auerbach, Elsa R. Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy. Washington, D.C. and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems, 1992.

____________. Bilingual Community Literacy Training Project: Final Report. Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1993. (Developed under a Grant for the U.S. Department of Education.)

Bach, Robert. Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities. New York, NY, 1993. (A report to the Ford Foundation by the National Board of the Changing Relations Project.)

Balliro, Lenore. "Reassessing Assessment in Adult ESL/Literacy." (Unpublished paper.) (ERIC Document ED 339 253)

Becker, Aliza. Building Bridges: A Resource Guide on Citizenship. Chicago, IL, 1993. (Report for the Illinois State Board of Education, Adult Education and Literacy Section.)

Benesch, Sarah. "ESL on Campus: Questioning Testing and Tracking Practices." in ESL in America: Myths and Possibilities. Ed. Sarah Benesch. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1991. 59-74.

Brindley, Goeffrey. Assessing Achievement in the Learner-Centered Curriculum. Sydney, Australia: Macquarie University, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, 1989.

California Health and Welfare Agency. A Survey of Newly Legalized Persons in California. San Diego, CA, CASAS, 1989.

Center for Applied Linguistics. ESL in the Workplace: English for Specific Purposes. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics. 1982.

Challis, Stephen. Methods to Increase the Number of Successful Transfers Between Programs by Students in Adult Literacy Programming: A Research Report. Manitoba, Canada: Secretary of State, Canada, 1991. (A paper prepared for the Literacy Workers' Alliance of Manitoba in Conjunction with the Building Better Links Steering Committee.)

Chisman, Forrest P. The Missing Link: Workplace Education in Small Business. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1992.

Chisman, Forrest P. and Renee S. Woodworth, The Promise of JOBS: Policies, Programs and Possibilities. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1992.

Clymer-Spradling, Carol. Quality, Standards and Accountability in ESL Programs. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1993.

Crandall, JoAnn. "Professionalism and Professionalization of Adult ESL Literacy." TESOL Quarterly, 27 (Autumn 1993) 497-515.

____________. Improving the Quality of Adult ESL Programs: Building the Nation's Capacity to Meet the Educational and Occupational Needs of Adults with Limited English Proficiency. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. 1993

Crandall, JoAnn and S. Imel. "Issues in Adult Literacy Education." The ERIC Review, 1 (2), 1991.

Committee on Federalism and National Purpose. To Form a More Perfect Union. Washington, D.C.: National Conference on Social Welfare, 1985.

Cornelius, Wayne. "Neo-Nativists Feed on Myopic Fears." *Los Angeles Times*. July 12, 1993.

Development Associates. National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs Second Interim Report—Profiles of Client Characteristics. Washington, D.C., 1993. (Prepared under Contract for the Department of Education.)

Development Associates. National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs First Interim Report—Profiles of Service Providers. Washington, D.C., 1992. (Prepared under Contract for the Department of Education.)

Fingeret, Hanna Arlene. It Belongs to Me: A Guide to Portfolio Assessment in Adult Education Programs. Durham, NC: Literacy South, 1993.

__________. Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions An Update. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, 1992.

Friedenberg, J.E., et al. Adapt Instruction for Limited-English Proficient Vocational Students. Columbus, OH: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1988.

Ignash, Jan M. "Tracking the Liberal Arts over Sixteen Years: Trends and Implications." Paper presented at the 1992 Conference of the California Association for Institutional Research, Ontario, California, November 1992.

Institute of International Education. Open Doors. 1991. New York: Institute of International Education, 1991.

Kirsch, Irwin S. and Ann Jungeblut. Profiling the Literacy Proficiencies of the JTPA and ES/UI Populations. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 1992. (Prepared under Contract to the Department of Labor.)

Kirsch, Irwin S., Ann Jungeblut, Lynn Jenkins and Andrew Kolstad. Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993.

Kremer, Nick and Lynn Savage. Employment-Related Literacy Approaches for Limited English Proficient Adults. Burlingame, CA: American Council of School Administrators, 1983.

La Vally, Rebecca. Californians Together: Defining the State's Role in Immigration. Sacramento, CA, 1993. (A report for the California Senate Office of Research.)

Lytle, Susan L., Alisa Belzer and Rebecca Reumann. Invitations to Inquiry: Rethinking Staff Development in Adult Literacy Education (Technical Report TR92-2). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992. (Developed for the National Center on Adult Literacy's Project entitled "Staff Development Through Practitioner Research—Adult Literacy Participant Inquiry Project.")

Lytle, Susan L. and Marcie Wolfe. "Adult Literacy Education: Program Evaluation and Learner Assessment." (Paper for ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, ED 315 665.)

Madison, James. Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787. New York: W.W. Norton, 1987.

Mansoor, Inaam. The Use of Technology in Adult ESL Programs: Current Practice--Future Promise. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1993.

McDonnell, Lorraine M. and Paul T. Hill. Newcomers in American Schools: Meeting the Educational Needs of Immigrant Youth. Santa Monica: RAND, 1993.

McGrail, Loren and Laura Purdom, eds. Adventures in Assessment: Learner-Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy. 3 vols. Boston: System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES), 1991-1992.

Meisenheimer III, Joseph R. "How do Immigrants Fare in the U.S. Labor Market?" Monthly Labor Review, 44. (December 1992): 3-19.

Mikulecky, Larry and Paul Lloyd. The Impact of Workplace Literacy Programs: A New Model for Evaluating the Impact of Workplace Literacy Programs (Technical Report TR93-2) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993.

Muller, Thomas. Immigrants and the American City. New York: New York University Press, 1993.

National Council of La Raza. Undocumented Immigrants and Public Benefits, Fact Sheet. Washington, D.C., 1993.

National Immigration Law Center. Guide to Alien Eligibility for Federal Programs (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA, National Immigration Law Center, 1993.

Packer, Arnold H. Retooling the American Workforce: The Role of Technology in Improving Adult Literacy During the 1990s. Southport, Connecticut: Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1988. (Paper prepared for the Project on Adult Literacy.)

Passel, Jeffrey S., and Barry Edmonston. Immigration and Race in the United States: the 20th and 21st Centuries, Washington, D.C. 1992. (Policy Discussion Paper for the Program for Research on Immigration Policy.)

Prete, Barbara. Sources of ESL Instruction in New York City. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1993.

Raimes, Ann. "The TOEFL Test of Written English: Causes for Concern." TESOL Quarterly, 24 (Autumn 1990), 427-442.

Sivin-Kachala, Jay and Ellen Bialo. Software for Adult Literacy: Scope, Suitability, Available Sources of Information, and Implications for Federal Policy. Springfield, VA: Interactive Educational Systems Design, 1989. (Paper prepared for the Office of Technology Assessment.)

Soifer, R., et al. The Complete Theory-to-Practice Handbook of Adult Literacy: Curriculum Design and Teaching Approaches. New York: Teachers College Press, 1990.

Spicer, Scot L., Jorge R. Sanchez, Saeed Ali. Statewide Survey of ESL Student Populations: Overview. Glendale, CA, 1989. (Report of the Glendale Community College Planning and Research Office.)

Stewart, David. Immigration and Education: The Crisis and the Opportunities. New York: Lexington Books, 1992.

Sticht, Thomas G. "Measuring Adult Literacy: A response." in Toward Defining Literacy Ed. R.L. Venezky, D.A. Wagner and B.S. Cilberti. Newark, NJ: International Reading Association, 1990. 48-53.

Tibbits, J. et al. The Delivery and Content of Training for Adult Education Teachers and Volunteer Instructors. Washington, D.C.: Pelavin Associates, 1991.

Turner, Terilyn C. Literacy and Machines: An Overview of the Use of Technology in Adult Literacy Programs (Technical Report TR93-3). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, P25-1092, Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992 to 2050. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.

__________. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1992 (112th edition). Washington, D.C., 1992.

__________. The Foreign Born Population in the United States: 1990. Prepared by the Ethnic and Hispanic Branch, Population Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1993.

__________. Detailed Population Characteristics, Part I: United States Summary: 1980. Prepared by the Economic and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1984.

____________. Educational Attainment for Persons 25 Years and Over, by State: 1990. Prepared by the Education and Special Stratification Branch, Population Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

____________. General Population Characteristics, United States: 1990. Prepared by the Economic and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

____________. Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for United States, Regions and States: 1990. Prepared by the Education and Special Stratification Branch, Population Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1993.

____________. Language Use and English Ability, Persons 18 Years and Over, by State: 1990. Prepared by the Education and Special Stratification Branch, Population Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

____________. Languages Spoken at Home by Persons 5 Years and Above, by State: 1990. Prepared by the Education and Special Stratification Branch, Population Division, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

____________. Selected Social Characteristics, by Congressional District: 1990. Prepared by the Economic and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

____________. Selected Tables from the August 7, 1992 Report of the Committee on Adjustment of Postcensal Estimates. Prepared by the Public Information Office, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

____________. Summary Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990. Prepared by the Economic and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

U.S. Department of Justice. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Immigration Reform and Control Act Report on the Legalized Population (M-375). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.

U.S. General Accounting Office. Program Evaluation and Methodology Division. Illegal Aliens: Despite Data Limitations, Current Methods Provide Better Population Estimates (GAO/PEMD-93-25). Washington, D.C.: GAO, 1993.

U.S. House of Representatives. Conference Committee on Appropriations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies. Conference Report. 103rd Cong., 1st Sess., 1993. H. Rept. 103-275 to accompany H.R. 2518.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. 1991 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (M-367). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.

Wagner, Daniel A. Myths and Misconceptions in Adult Literacy: A Research and Development Perspective (Policy Brief 93-1). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993.

Weinstein-Shr, Gail. Restoring the Intergenerational Cycle of Family Teaching: Family Literacy in Multilingual Communities. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1993.

Weinstein-Shr, Gail and Elizabeth Quintero, eds. Immigrant Learners and Their Families: Literacy to Connect the Generations. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems, 1993.

Wiley, Terrence. Access, Participation, and Transition in Adult ESL: Implications for Policy and Practice. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, 1993.

Wrigley, Heide Spruck and Katherine A. Brady. Making Amnesty Work: Joint Efforts to Meet the Needs of Newly Legalized Workers. San Francisco: Immigrant Legal Resource Center, 1989.

Wrigley, Heide Spruck and Gloria J.A. Guth. Bringing Literacy to Life: Issues and Options in Adult ESL. San Mateo, California: Aguirre International, 1992.

Zimmerman, Wendy and Michael Fix. After Arrival: An Overview of Federal Immigration Policy in the United States. Washington, D.C., 1993. (Report for The Urban Institute's Immigrant Policy Program.)

____________. Immigrant Policy in the States: A Wavering Welcome. Washington, D.C., 1993. (Report for The Urban Institute's Immigrant Policy Program.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The director of the Southport Institute's project on adult ESL was Heide Spruck Wrigley. Danielle T. Ewen served as the project associate and was responsible for most of the data analysis and information gathering. She also played an important role in all of the project's other activities. Carmelita H. Cooksey managed the project's logistics and finances through July, 1993, after which Amanda M. Hughes ably performed these tasks. Forrest P. Chisman supervised the progress of the project and participated in all aspects of its work.

Most of the funding for this project was provided by a grant from the Lila Wallace-Readers' Digest Foundation. Additional funding was provided by a general support grant to the Institute from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Business Council for Effective Literacy has applied for state permission to make a special contribution to the Institute for support of its work on adult ESL. The Institute wishes to extend its warmest thanks to these organizations for their confidence and support.

Because so many people provided valuable information and advice to the Institute, it is impossible to acknowledge all of them here. However, the Institute wishes to express special thanks to the consultants who served on its advisory panel. They are: Robert Berdan, Carol Clymer-Spradling, JoAnn Crandall, Allene Grognet, Jeanne Lopez-Valadez, Barbara Prete, Klaudia Rivera, Gail Weinstein-Shr and Terrence Wiley. The Institute also wishes to thank Inaam Mansoor and Barbara Burnaby who served as consultants on special topics. In addition, the Institute wishes to express its gratitude to Michael Fix and the staff of the Urban Institute for conducting a special analysis of Census data that was essential to the preparation of this report, and to Aguirre International for making its facilities available for certain meetings in California.

Finally, the Institute staff wishes to assure all the administrators, scholars, teachers, students and others who gave freely of their time and energy to help make this project a success that their contribution will always be remembered and that the staff owes them its deepest gratitude.

The Authors

Forrest P. Chisman is president of The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis, and author of the award-winning publication, ***Jump Start: The Federal Role in Adult Literacy***. From 1983-88, he was director of the Project on the Federal Social Role, and previously an official in the Commerce Department and program officer of the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation. Dr. Chisman received his B.A. from Harvard University and his Ph.D. from Oxford in political science. He is author of ***The Missing Link***, a report on workplace education, ***The Promise of JOBS*** (with Renee Woodworth), and ***Government for the People: The Federal Social Role*** (with Alan Pifer), published by W. W. Norton & Co., as well as numerous articles on education, public policy and communications.

Heide Spruck Wrigley is project director for the adult ESL policy study conducted by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. She holds a Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in language, literacy and learning and a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics. She has written extensively on second language education for language minority adults and is the primary author of "Bringing Literacy to Life", a handbook based on a national study on innovative approaches to ESL literacy. She is a senior researcher associated with Aguirre International, a minority-owned research firm in San Mateo, California and a consultant to the Center for Applied Linguistics, in Washington, D.C.

Danielle T. Ewen is program associate for the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. Upon graduating from Columbia University with her M.P.A., Ms. Ewen was awarded a Presidential Management Internship. Through that program, she worked as a policy analyst in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Migrant Education and as a legislative fellow for children's welfare issues for the Congressional Sunbelt Caucus.

THE SOUTHPORT
INSTITUTE
FOR POLICY
ANALYSIS

The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis was founded in 1987 by Alan Pifer, president emeritus of Carnegie Corporation of New York. The Institute provides objective, non-partisan analysis of public and private policy issues of national importance. It is the successor organization to the Project on the Federal Social Role and the Project on an Aging Society, which operated from 1982 to 1987. The Institute's primary interest is in policies to advance human resource development and, in particular, those issues that affect the quality of the American workforce.

The Institute sets its own agenda and solicits financial support from a broad range of sources, including foundations, corporations, government and individuals, to carry out projects selected by its board and staff. In selecting projects, it places priority on work that can lead to constructive change in the near term. It is committed to the broadest possible dissemination of its findings and to ensuring that its work helps to set the directions of national policy.

The Institute's principal office is in Washington, D.C., and it maintains an office in Southport, Connecticut. Projects of the Institute are managed from both offices.

Southport Institute for Policy Analysis

Washington Office
820 First Street, N.E., Suite 460
Washington, D.C. 20002
202 - 682-4100